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SUNDAY TALKS

TO THE YOUNG

JOSIAH MEE



The Bible Institute
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Chicago.

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"SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME"

SUNDAY TALKS

TO THE YOUNG

CHICAGO

BY
JOSIAH MEE.

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PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

We have added this volume to THE COLPORTAGE LIBRARY in order to supply a book from which mothers can read to their families on the Sabbath and at other times. The importance of such home reading cannot be over-estimated.

The addresses it contains were originally delivered at Sunday morning services in the author's church, and thus they have been tested as to their power to interest the young. They are not so heavy that these will not listen, or so light that they will not instruct and build up character.

There are thirty-one selections—enough to last for a month, reading one chapter a day.

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The Deliverer.

Romans 11: 26.

This is one of Christ's famous titles. Many men have titles such as M.A., B.A., General, Doctor, Bishop, etc., but Jesus has more than them all. A Sunday School teacher once asked her scholars to find out for her all the titles of Christ they could in the Scriptures. One of the girls brought the next Sunday a list written out of no fewer than forty-nine, and she had not included this—

“THE DELIVERER.”

Let us see what our Lord delivers from. We need only mention one thing—SIN. From His victory over this sting of death He has His name. His name shall be called JESUS, because He shall save His people from their sins.

Let us sing our Great Deliverer's praise.

I. SIN IS A PIT.

Men fall into it, and the further they fall the further from the light and the deeper in the mire; but from this horrible pit, the good Lord is the Deliverer. Read what David says:

“I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet

upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.

Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies."

II. SIN IS A FIRE.

A naughty tongue is set on fire of hell. Covetousness burns like fire. The good are bidden to pull the wicked out of the fire, but the Great Deliverer says, "The fire shall not kindle upon thee."

III. SIN IS A LION.

When the old-time map-makers did not know what else to put into a certain part of a map they used to write "Here are lions" across the blank place.

All over the world the fierce lion of sin stalks and growls for his prey. In the time of Cain this wild beast was crouching at that man's door. Be sure your sin will find you out, unless He who delivered Paul out of the mouth of the lion delivers you also.

IV. SIN IS A PRISON.

Giant Despair, who governs that dungeon, beats, binds, brands his prisoners unmercifully. They cannot sing like the two men in Philippi's jail did, nor can they escape forever except by the grace of Him who is stronger than the strong man (giant) armed, who is such a Deliverer that He can preach "the opening of the prison to them that are bound."

V. SIN IS A DISEASE.

No leprosy so loathsome or fatal; no fiery serpent so terrible in its sting as that, to deliver from which the Son of Man was lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The Great Physician, with His balm, is not only in Gilead, but stands ever ready to heal and make whole all who have need of a physician.

All the fitness He requireth
Is to feel your need of Him;
This He gives you,
'Tis His Spirit's rising beam.

VI. SIN IS A BONDAGE.

No Pharaoh was ever so hard a task-master as the tyrant Sin. Paul talks about him in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where Sin ought to be printed with a capital letter as a proper noun.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you."

Jesus talks about him as the sinner's tyrant, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin"; but He says—He who brings sinners out of the iron furnace and from under the hard yoke—
'If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.'



“Children that will not Lie.”

Isaiah 63: 8.

Here is a picture for every child to ponder. Will it stand as a portrait or pencil-sketch of you? It is a very short description, but a sufficient one, of the people of God—anybody can understand it, anybody can recollect it, anybody who will can come up to it. It does not require learning or cleverness to be like these people God chooses for His own—“children that will not lie.”

Let us look at a child of this sort.

I. HE WILL NOT LIE FOR FUN.

Other boys may try to cram all sorts of “fibs” and “stretchers” into their companions, but he “fears a lie” so much that he is ready rather to be laughed at than to try to raise a laugh by telling even “a white lie.” Upon his lips is simple truth. He does not pretend to know what he does not know, or to be able to do what he knows he cannot do. Whether he remembers the verse or not, he knows that all things are divided into two classes—those that are true and those that are not—and only on the things that are true will he think even. He may blunder, fall into mistake, repeat what he thinks is correct but is not, but he will not try to deceive for the sake of amusement, or for the sake of appearing wise or clever.

II. HE WILL NOT LIE FOR PROFIT.

He will not cheat at marbles. He will not copy or crib his lessons. He will not take notes into the examination-room. He will not try to deceive his father or his teacher, or mislead his brother. He will keep his promise, though someone he has spoken to may have forgotten. He will not get hold of bits of excuses not to do his duty. He will not come "the old soldier" and pretend to be poorly or tired so as to get a holiday. He will always speak the exact truth about the results of a day's fishing. He may be tempted to do so: he may find that other boys and girls cheat, and that he loses his marbles or his place in class or in the examination because they are dishonest, but he will not lie.

III. HE WILL NOT LIE FOR FEAR.

Often others will try to lead him not to speak the truth, and to threaten him if he will not say what they do, but his tongue refuses to pronounce a falsehood. When he has neglected duty or fallen into some serious fault of behavior or temper, he may be afraid of consequences, but he will rather suffer than be a liar. He fears God, who has said that all liars shall have their part in the lake of fire, more than what man can do to him. The fear of God always puts out the fear of man or of consequences, just as the sunshine puts out the fire in the grate.

The following lines I found one day in the handwriting of a Sunday School Superintendent, who long since passed to his reward, after holding office in a country

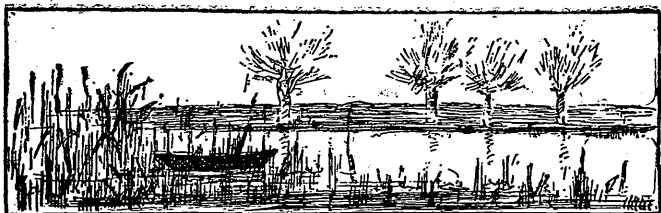
school for more than twenty years in succession. They may seem old-fashioned now, but they are not out of date:—

ON LYING.

Lie not, but let thy heart be true to God.
Cowards tell lies, and those that fear the rod.
Dare to be true; nothing can need a lie,
A fault which needs it *most* grows *two* thereby.

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”





“The Earth is the Lord’s and the Fulness thereof.”

Psalm 24: 1.

This verse occupies, I think, a more conspicuous place in England than any other in the Bible. It stands on the front of the Royal Exchange, in London, and is in sight of tens of thousands of men every day of the week. As it is repeated three times at least in the Scriptures, it must be of great importance.

Let us recollect that the earth is the Lord’s because

I. HE IS HER MAKER.

He who built all things is God. How great He is! How wise! How good! The Founder and Carpenter of the world. He wrought by weight and measure, but what mighty scales and tools He used. How full the storehouses of the world are! What crops come out of the soil, what draughts of fishes out of the sea, what iron and gold and gems out of the earth and the depths! God thought of everything, when He furnished the great home for His family.

“The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty! Thy power hath founded of old.”

No wonder David said, when the gifts for the temple were all heaped together, “Of Thine own have we given Thee.”

II. HE IS HER OWNER.

Man is God's steward of all the world's wealth, but he is only occupier, and not possessor. God parts with nothing. We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Not a particle of matter can the biggest thief steal out of the world, though he spend a life-time in trying how to rob God in this matter; and however he may change the shape and character and position of what he finds in the world, the cleverest philosopher never yet CREATED a single grain of sand. "Who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to them again," is the safe promise to pay of St. Paul. God lends us everything to enjoy, nothing to think our own. In this world we have only a life interest, and are but tenants at will. It all belongs to God just as much as it did when Adam's footstep was the only one upon its surface. He is the Landlord of the entire globe—the earth and the increase of it are His forever.

III. HE IS HER MASTER.

The seasons, the weather, the floods, volcanoes, and earthquakes are all His servants. See Jesus Christ controlling the laws of gravitation, of growth; at a word quelling winds and seas; clouding the sun in thick darkness, etc. See, at the word of God, the Red Sea parted, the clouds pouring out bread six days a week for forty years, the rock sending forth streams of living water in the desert.

The Master and Lord of the earth controls all things

still for the sake of His Son and His Kingdom. When a wind is needed, that good work may be done and prayer answered, it is made to blow. When rain is required as a sign to a faithful missionary's message, it descends at his request. The earth brings forth plentifully sometimes when a miserly farmer's barns are stuffed full already, and is sterile when some poor husbandman goes forth with tears, sowing his few precious grains of seed—for this is a stage of trial, man has sinned and is out of paradise now, and we see not yet all things put under him; but the sure word of promise stands, "The meek shall inherit the earth," and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just, and every man who lives for God and seeks first His kingdom and righteousness, has found out many a time in his life that circumstances have a Master, and that all things serve His sovereign will.

Because the earth is the Lord's, let everyone take care.

I. NOT TO ABUSE HER.

God hears the earth's cry when a covetous man tries to squeeze out too much increase without feeding the land. She must enjoy her Sabbaths, she must be kept, and dressed, and tilled. To this end the husbandman God doth instruct. God hears the earth. Hosea wrote:

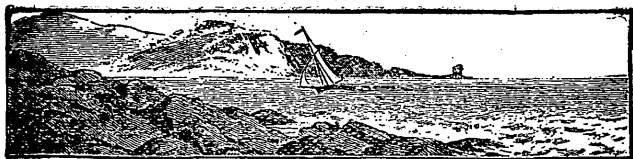
"And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil."

II. NOT TO DEFILE HER.

All sin is defilement. Adam's iniquity covered the earth with noxious growths. The iniquity of the Canaanites caused the earth to cast forth her fearful burden. When she drinks human blood, when unnatural sin is committed, mother earth is made to groan (as St. Paul writes) for the manifestation of the sons of God.

III. NOT TO MAKE AN IDOL OF HER.

The world is good, is beautiful, but it is not to stand in the place of God. Love not the world. Be not a man of the world, but a man of God. What shall it profit even if the whole world be gained if the soul is lost? There have been sun-worshippers (Baal), and moon-worshippers (Ashteroth), but, alas! more people bow down to the earth still than either to sun or moon. The earth, though it is the Lord's, has its place, and that place is not in man's heart, but under his feet. "He hath put ALL THINGS under his feet."



A Bad Time Coming.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."
Jeremiah, 8: 20.

"The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and——"
Then the year is as good as over, and only winter is left. It is a gloomy lookout for those who have a great work to do or a great battle to fight if winter is upon them. As "the dawning of the morning" stands for hope and coming good, so the approach of winter means misery, death and despair. In the East "the time when kings went forth to war" was not winter; and our Lord said to His people, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." There is little chance of escape then, and almost certain death. The strait gate is hard enough to enter in the best weather, but who will be able to get in when it is

CHOKED UP WITH SNOW?

Fancy! "NOT SAVED," and winter blasts blowing and frost biting. One man said,

My days are in the yellow leaf,
The flowers and fruits of life are gone;
The worm, the canker, and the grief
Are mine alone.

For it was winter, and he was not saved. Winter means

I. NO SUNSHINE.

"The days of darkness" Solomon talks about, and a great many more have found out what he meant when

the sun was darkened, and when for a long time not so much as a star appeared. But they had HAD the long days of summer, when the sun was bright, when all the day long the way was plain before them. These they neglected, and now they have no light, no light! Darkness is come upon them; they sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, but are not saved.

II. NO COMFORT.

Summer is pleasant, but winter is chill and bitter. Till the end of harvest there are plenty of flowers, and there is plenty of fruit and food. Now things are changed. The butterflies are gone; the singing of birds is hushed; everything outside looks dull and miserable. Those who are lost NOW—"not saved"—are in evil case, for winter is a suffering as well as a perilous time. The days are come when men say, "I have no pleasure in them."

III. NO COMPANY.

The stillness and loneliness of winter, those who live in the country understand better than town dwellers. The visitors who look in on fine summer days are all gone. The wide waste of hard snow which is visible everywhere is a sort of barrier none care to pass. There is nothing to find and nothing to do in the field or the garden—desolation reigns supreme. The iron chain of winter, which is over all things, is grim and terrible as death. Not saved in winter, and left alone, means to perish miserably. "Ye shall die in your sins" explains it.

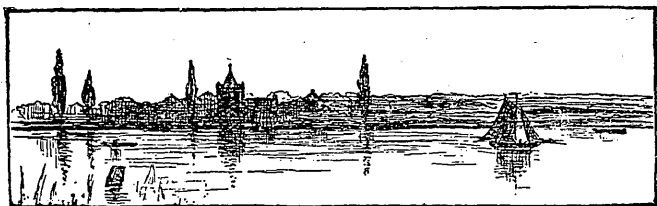
Does this seem a strange lesson for the young? They ought to be as wise and far-seeing as the tiny ants which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provide their food in the summer and gather it in the harvest; and they should recollect that winter comes when summer and harvest are past. "The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer." Therefore let young folks

1. Learn this verse:—

"Use time in time
While time doth last,
For all time is no time
When the time is past."

2. Obey this command:—

"Do thy diligence to come (to Jesus) before winter."



A Venomous Beast.

“And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita.

And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.

And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, ‘No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.’

And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.” (Acts, twenty-eighth chapter, verses one to six.)

Paul’s viper is a sort of picture of other and worse things. The devil himself is called “that old serpent,” and many sins, and sinners, too, fasten on people, and if not cast off in divine strength at last bite like a serpent and sting like an adder

TEMPTATION, LIKE PAUL'S VIPER,

(1.) MAY BE UNNOTICED AT FIRST.

Vipers and other snakes lie dormant in cold weather, and the busy, kindly apostle gathered this with the sticks in his armful of fuel for the fire. Busy, kind people, never thinking of wrong, but working hard for the comfort and help of others, may unawares bring temptation upon themselves. The devil lies crouched not only in the bunch of grapes, and the furze roots, and the apple tree branches, but sometimes in the bundle of tracts, under the seat of the Sunday School form, and even between the Bible and hymn-book on the pulpit cushion.

(2.) COMES OUT OF THE FIRE.

Our comforts and blessings are not unlikely to quicken the sleeping viper of sin. A young man went on a holiday to enjoy himself, but there he found the gambling table. An old man made a big fortune, and out of the heap of gold he had gathered there sprang forth the viper of pride which did eat his flesh like a fiery serpent. A woman had a bottle of wine to make her strong, because she was poorly, and felt as comfortable as the apostle with his drenched garments close to the ruddy fire glow, but the love of strong drink pierced her through like a fiery dart.

Be sure and mind lest a temptation fasten on you when you are very comfortable and at ease.

(3.) FLIES AT YOUR FLESH.

This evil reptile did not just get hold of Paul's

sleeve as a playful dog will perhaps snatch at your dress, but it stung the flesh and hung on like a leech or a bulldog.

Sin always wants to wound and defile the temple of God and that which is made in His likeness. The devil loves to degrade, if he can, the human face and form divine. How many bear the horrid marks of sin in their faces. When he gets hold he has no mercy; he will sting, and gnaw, and poison, and debase, till the once lovely form is only fit to be covered over in the dust out of sight. The sting of death is sin, and it always stings to death unless the victory is given by God's grace.

(4.) LOOKS TO OTHERS LIKE THE MARK OF A
BAD CHARACTER.

The Maltese thought Paul was a murderer, because this foul thing flew at him, and no doubt it was Satan's intention to damage Paul's reputation if he could. We must not judge by the outward look of things always. Many an honest man has been charged with dishonesty; many a teetotaler with secret drinking. Joseph was not wicked because his master's wife slandered him, and even his lost robe was no proof of his guilt. To be tempted is not always to be tarnished. See in the wilderness of Judea the venomous beast hanging to the hand of the Son of God Himself for forty days, and yet He felt no harm. The accuser of the brethren has been a liar from the beginning.

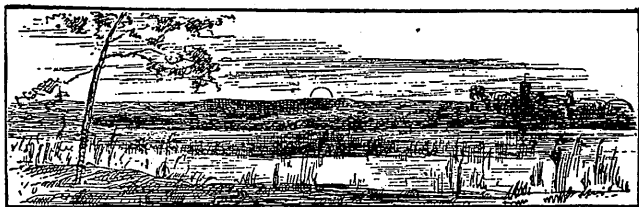
(5.) IT MUST NOT BE PLAYED WITH.

Now, if Paul had fondled that viper, had placed it in his bosom, or even continued to hold and examine it curiously, most likely he would have suffered, and it would have served him right.

The only way of escape from temptation and sin is to cast it off instantly. He who procrastinates is lost. A moment's delay in casting off the foul viper may make all the difference between innocence and guilt—life and death. An old proverb says, "There is no distinction between little and big in snakes."

(6.) THE VICTOR GAINS POWER OVER MEN
FOR GOD.

As these islanders felt that Paul was somehow nobler than themselves when he shook off the poisonous beast and stood unharmed among them, so the world will give honor to moral courage and strength to retain virtue and piety in the midst of temptation. To him that overcometh, even now, God giveth a crown—men feel that he is nobler than they, and they will listen to his words. So the devil very often helps to advertise the Gospel, and builds a pulpit and rings the bell for a preacher like Paul, who, treading Satan under foot, takes "a rise" out of his contemptible footstool.



About Ears.

God says to the preacher "Speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" To the congregation, "He that hath ears to hear let him keep them open." Through Ear-gate the devil got into Man-Soul, and through that gate He travels who is the Word of God. Keep your ears open, for faith cometh by hearing. Hear, and your soul shall live. The Bible speaks of deaf people who have ears. Let us see what sort of ears they have.

I. COVERED EARS.

We have no earlids, like eyelids, but it is a very old trick for people to shut their ears up, and to turn them away from the truth. None so deaf as those that will not hear.

God has to uncover some people's ears, and those who will not let Him are called "uncircumcised in ears." The long, thick, black locks of pride and self-will may resist the finger of God that would draw them aside, but when God's word is spoken in judgment those covered ears shall feel it.

II. THROTTLED EARS.

When the doctor looks into some cases of deafness, he says, "Your ears are right enough, the mischief is

in the throat. The stoppage is at the other end of the tubes."

"Let these sayings sink down into your ears," said our blessed Lord, but in some cases at church what is heard with our outward ears does not go DOWN, but goes THROUGH. In at one ear, and out at the other.

Men with throttled ears thought that Ezekiel's mighty preaching was just like pretty music—they only heard a pleasant humming in their ears. People with throttled ears liked to get as many to speak to them as ever they could, because their ears itched so, and it was pleasant to be tickled. But this is not what God wants us to sit in church for. Keep your ears open, unstopped. Let them try words as you taste food. But bread in the mouth only will not make you strong; if the word is in thy mouth, swallow it.

III. BEWITCHED EARS.

"John! John!! Bless the boy, are you deaf?"

"Did you call me, mother?"

"Yes, two or three times; what have you been doing with yourself?"

"Oh, I never heard you. I was listening to such lovely music. I thought I was in a grand palace."

"Ah, castle-building and day-dreaming again. You read too many of those fairy tales and such like. Run to the post with this letter for me."

Plenty of people's hearts are so full of other sounds and voices that they can't hear. "Keep your ears open" means "be present, not absent"; be alert, be listening.

“Why do ye not understand my speech?” asked the Savior, of the Jews, and then He gives them the answer to His own question, “because ye cannot hear my word.”

Bewitched ears, are, like the fool's eyes, in the ends of the earth. What good are they there? Listening with such ears will no more make your heart clean, than looking into a mirror will make your face clean.

IV. WAKENED EARS.

Isaiah tells us God wakened his ears every morning to hear as the learned. Some people will not be wakened. They are not like Samuel; he did not pull the bed-clothes over his head, or go on dreaming when the Voice came to him. He was wide awake in a moment, eyes open, ears open, lips open. Of such hearers Christ said, “Blessed are your ears, for they hear.”



A Fool and his Money.

“For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.

Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, ‘Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents. Behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.’

His lord said unto him, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.’

He also that had received two talents came and said, ‘Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents. Behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.’

His lord said unto him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. Thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord.'

Then he which had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed. And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth. Lo, there thou hast that is thine.'

His lord answered and said unto him, 'Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (Matthew, twenty-fifth chapter, verses fourteen to thirty.)

I. WHAT DID HE DO WITH IT?

Buried it, and thought he was very clever. Laughed at the diligence of his neighbors, who ploughed in the cold mornings and went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and who had long patience as they waited for the precious fruits. He would not let even the bankers get

anything out of him—no, he knew better. It was too much trouble, and what did he care for other people's needs? he was all right. He would have an answer if it was ever wanted. He had not asked for the talent, and did not care for God or man, but only for himself.

II. WHAT DID HE SAY ABOUT IT?

He said he was afraid! It is a pity he had not fear enough to make him work. An idle man is always ready with excuses. He is mean enough to try and lay the blame upon the Master himself. "I knew you were a hard man!" He was soft enough, or would not have said this.

Some idle folks think they compliment others when they say "Ah! I am not like you; you are so strong, and so clever, no wonder you succeed." "Genius is nothing else than a capacity for hard work," one great man said. This story looks in that direction.

III. WHAT DID HE GET FOR IT?

1. *Rebuke.* "Thou wicked"—for all this excuse is a lie; the reasons alleged are false. Your work was no greater than your ability; it was not fear, it was idleness ("Thou slothful") that was at the bottom of your heart.

He who will not take pains, pains shall take him. The idler has no reply. Every mouth shall be stopped, even the sluggard's, before God.

2. *Loss.* "Take the talent away." He cannot be trusted with God's gifts who will not take the trouble to

use them for the good of others. Unfaithful stewardship of any good, ends in bankruptcy.

After a time the reckoning comes. Perhaps this idler thought the Master was as listless as he, and would not note a single talent in his book; but God's accounts are like a banker's, worked out to a decimal point.

3. *Punishment.* Perhaps he thought, "Well, the Master can but recall his gift, and I shall be right enough. I do not care about being a ruler and going into the joy where the King is, and where these diligent people are; I am quite content to go on as I am."

But he was undeceived. Neglect of God's gifts is a crime, and must be punished. "Cast him out"—no friendship for the man who never cared to help others—"into darkness," for he never made the world bright for others; let him lie where his money lay. Cast him out; he is unprofitable, good for nothing, as his life has shown. But listen what comes up out of the darkness; it is all mystery, but THOSE SOUNDS OF WEEPING AND GNASHING OF TEETH, what do they mean?



Our Father Abraham.

“And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the the heat of the day.

And he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, ‘My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant.’

And they said, ‘So do, as thou hast said.’

And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, ‘Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.

And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man; and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat.

And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on

the way." (Genesis, eighteenth chapter, verses one to eight, and sixteen.)

The importance of this great man is shown in many ways. He is called the Father of the Faithful, the Pattern of Believers, the Friend of God. His name is mentioned above fifty times in the New Testament Scriptures. The trifles, therefore, that went to make up the perfection of this mighty prince are all well worth our notice. Let everyone who would in Abraham's footsteps tread remember that

I. HE WAS A POLITE MAN.

Notice how he saluted the strangers, going forward to meet them, and bowing before them. He was not like the surly Nabal, or even that Pharisee, Simon, whose lack of civility our blessed Lord noticed and publicly rebuked.

Good manners may exist with wicked conduct, but rudeness and incivility generally spring from a bad heart. "Be courteous" is a divine command, and remember, it was by the rough hand of Peter, the old Galilean fisherman, that the Holy Ghost chose to write it. Want of politeness very often means the presence of pride. Many rich men would scorn to say as Abraham did, "Your servant!"

Think of the perfect politeness in the conduct of Him who poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and who wrapped together the napkin which had been about His head, and laid it aside, on the morning of the resurrection.

II. HE WAS A QUICK MAN.

He "ran" from the tent door, though it was the heat of the day. He quickly made his proposals of hospitality. He "hastened" into the tent. He said to Sarah, "Make ready quickly." He "ran" unto the herd. He "hasted" the young man to dress the calf.

Is there a single instance in the Bible in which God chose for His friend or servant a dull, listless, half-hearted, lukewarm man? Even His angels He causes to fly swiftly. The Holy Ghost is the spirit of quick understanding, and sharp perception is seldom accompanied by heavy, lumbering, bodily movement.

All through Abraham's life his activity was as marked as his courtesy. For one thing, he was a man who, when he had anything important to do, got up early in the morning to do it.

III. HE WAS A HANDY MAN.

Emigrants must be such if they are to succeed still. The lesson shows that he knew several things: 1. How bread should be made, and the number of measures of meal, and the kind of flour. 2. That "cakes upon the hearth" would be the quickest prepared. 3. That he could choose from the herd "a calf tender and good." 4. That he could gird himself and come forth and serve his guests under the shade of the tree.

If God had made Adam as big a noodle as some of his sons have been, he would not have been of great service in Eden to dress it and to keep it. An old missionary said it was a good thing for him, and for many

others, that when he went to Africa he was an M.A.—that is, a Master of the useful Arts. Unless we have misread the parables, and mistaken many allusions in the Acts and the Epistles, both our Lord Himself and the great Apostle to the Gentiles were men of affairs—not those who came to be waited on, but those whose hands were ready to minister at any time to the necessities of others.

Boys and girls should pray for tact, deftness, common sense, and presence of mind. For lack of such qualities many an angel's visit has been missed, and great blessings lost to families and the world. These things are certainly taught in the school of Christ.

IV. HE WAS A GENEROUS MAN.

There are many people who will give to those they know, but they are always suspicious of strangers. It seems that the angel of the Lord came in the form of a stranger, and the lodging of strangers has always been a mark of Christian discipleship.

To-day very few are preparing themselves for the word of commendation which Abraham will receive, "I was a stranger, and ye took me in." Great towns and big streets are apt to make people selfish, and forgetful of the little acts of generosity common in the country, and very jealous of any "intruders."

See how this good man's heart led him on. He proposed first a morsel of bread for the travellers, but he ended by serving them with butter, and milk, and veal. So true it is that generous impulses, yielded to, improve

and enlarge the heart. Those who give as little as possible will soon lose all joy in giving that little.

Abraham was not tired of the company of his visitors, for when they left he did not bow them a cold good-bye, but went with them to bring them on the way—a very lovely mark of sincere hospitality.

Remember those that become rusty, idle, selfish, and awkward are not likely to find either men or angels coming out of their way to give them a call, either at noonday or in the evening.





“His Majesty.”

“And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.

And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elijah talking with Him.

Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’

While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.’

And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.

And Jesus came and touched them, and said, ‘Arise, and be not afraid.’

And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” (Matthew, seventeenth chapter, verses one to eight.)

This is how Peter, after thirty years, speaks of the

Transfiguration of Jesus, which is related here: "We were eye-witnesses of His Majesty."

Nearly all through His life in this world our Savior was like a great king in the form and dress of a servant, but it was needful that He should manifest His glory to some witnesses. This He did by miracles, and in other ways. On this occasion three chosen witnesses alone were taken up into a high mountain apart to behold His glory, as of the only-begotten of the Father. There they saw

I. HOW BEAUTIFUL HE WAS.

While He prayed there came upon His face the beauty of the Lord. He shone not like Moses did upon Mount Sinai, because of reflection, but through the out-shining of the glory which was hidden within. This made His very garments white as the light. Moses' beauty could be hidden with a veil, just as a diamond can be covered, but the beauty of Christ's glorious body dyed His robes all the colors of the rainbow.

Perhaps it was of this sight that St. Paul thought when he wrote:—"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," and—"We see Jesus crowned with glory and honor."

II. HOW LEARNED HE WAS.

The authorized teachers of the day despised the Master because they said He had never learned, but here are the two greatest teachers of the world in converse with Him,—Moses the Giver, and Elijah the Re-

storer, of the Law. The disciples would remember, when they heard Him speak, that He did not destroy the Law and the Prophets, but that He fulfilled them.

If He was "before Abraham," no wonder that Moses and Elijah were His friends. They both had wrought miracles, fasted forty days, divided the waters, rebuked kings, and were wondrous in life and death. It seems that the disciples were able to recognize these great prophets, to understand their speech, and to enjoy their companionship. It was heaven to be on the mountain top with Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and with just men made perfect.

III. HOW NEAR TO HEAVEN HE WAS.

If they could behold the Master and the saints without terror, the awful cloud of the Lord as it descended filled them with the same dread as that which Moses and Elijah felt in the presence of God. They fell to the earth on their faces at the sound of the Voice from the excellent glory, but the Savior saw and heard all as that which was familiar and delightful. It was His Father who spake, "This is my beloved Son." Moses and Elijah were servants, but "THIS" a Son, a beloved Son, always well-pleasing in the sight of God the Father. So well-pleasing that for His sake He is pleased with Moses and Elijah, Peter, James, and John, and all mankind.

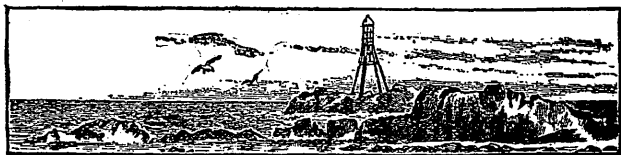
IV. HOW SOLEMN HIS TEACHING WAS.

There were many wonderful words of the Lord Jesus, at which some people were astonished and others were

offended, but this Voice from heaven, "HEAR HIM!" would teach the apostles that all His words were the very words of God. Up to this time it might be said, "They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them"; but now their importance is set aside, and the Son of God becomes the Faithful and True Witness, whose words shall never pass away.

Jesus is the Prophet and the Lawgiver of the world forever. When the disciples' eyes were opened, Moses and Elijah had vanished away. They had come to give their testimony to Christ, and now that is done, "they, looking up, saw no man save Jesus only."





God's Armor.

"My brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians, sixth chapter, verses ten to seventeen.)

Paul was among soldiers when he wrote this, and he knew there was a battle for him to fight, and for all the Christians at Ephesus. He speaks of the army of the enemy, and then calls on all who are on God's side to arm themselves. These verses tell you just how Paul felt as one of the soldiers of Christ. Let us consider whether we feel the same.

I. HE HAD THE BELT OF TRUTH

close to his heart, and, as the foundation of all he knew, he was sincere and real. This was his rejoicing—a good conscience.

II. HE HAD THE COAT OF MAIL OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

No one could say that he had wronged them, or had done them evil. He is very safe whose character will bear inspection, and who stands before God justified by faith.

III. THE SWIFT, STRONG SHOES OF GOSPEL GRACE,

which helped him on many a rough and thorny road. If he had not wings on his heels like the fabled messenger of the gods, or seven-league boots, he had his heels anointed as well as his head. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good things."

IV. HE HAD THE GREAT SHIELD OF FAITH.

Believing in the presence and love and faithfulness of God, not doubting the truth of His promises, but resting always on His Holy Word, not one burning or poisoned arrow could enter to wound or corrupt his heart. He could have sung:—

"I can believe, I do believe,
That Jesus died for me;
That on the cross He shed His blood,
From sin to set me free."

V. HE WORE THE GLITTERING HELMET OF HOPE.

When he got the bright hope of deliverance from all sin, and of eternal glory, it made him lift up his head—

he was taller as well as happier. He who has no hope has no strength. Paul did not wear the eagle crest of Rome, but the red and white insignia of the Cross and the hovering Dove.

VI. HE GRASPED THE DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

God's Word was the weapon of his warfare, and he was an expert swordsman. He knew that nothing could resist that flame of fire which was burning in his heart and flaming from his lips, just as he could not resist in Stephen's case.

VII. HE HAD ABUNDANT STORES OF PROVISION ALWAYS AT HAND—IN PRAYER.

A armor and weapons are soon of no avail unless the soldier's strength is sustained, but Paul knew where his fresh springs of strength lay and had no fear of the stoppage of supplies. He would be able to withstand in the day of battle, and, having done all, to stand entire at last—more than a conqueror, because in all things, in all prayer, he had learned to depend on God.

Are you armed like him? or are you fighting against such men as this? I should not like to have to oppose troops armed like Paul was, for I know on which side the victory must be. If you are not yet armed on the side of goodness and of Christ, take heed and beware what you do, lest haply ye be found to fight even against God.



The Hidden Man.

“Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” (Matthew, twelfth chapter, verses thirty-three to thirty-seven.)

Our Lord was always teaching the people that our outward life of conduct and speech only shows just what sort of a being the inner man is. He very often calls that invisible man inside us “*the heart*,” sometimes “soul.” He knew what was in man. In the verses quoted He shows what power that hidden man within has to use the tongue, and how he will be judged for it. If he only sends forth “idle words,” he will have to account for them at the Judgment Day, but if he goes so far as to use the tongue to pour forth blas-

phemous words against the Holy Spirit of God, the wrath of God abideth on him for ever.

We learn here that the master of the tongue is

I. A GREAT COLLECTOR.

He is always picking up and gathering into a treasury all sorts of things. If he likes that which is good, he gets that; if that which is evil, he gets a whole storehouse full of rubbish, or even worse. There are three sorts of treasuries: *First*, like Joseph's barns, full of good and precious corn only; *second*, like Solomon's ships, having gold, silver, ivory, and, alas! also apes and peacocks; *third*, like Jeremiah's basket of figs, in which all were naughty and bad, corrupt and abominable. This work of collecting into the treasury is always going on, and the heart is, besides, like a well in which the springs are always rising and keeping it full, no matter how much goes out.

II. A GREAT DISTRIBUTOR.

He uses the hands and feet, and sometimes even the eyes, to give out his treasures, but his special agent and messenger is the tongue. If he is like a viper, his tongue is full of deadly poison. If he is like a vine, his tongue brings forth clusters of rich grapes, and no thistles and thorns, much less poison berries, for in it is the law of kindness and of truth.

But he cannot help distributing whatever he possesses. Good or evil things, they are sure to be brought forth, so that

III. HE HAS GREAT RESPONSIBILITY.

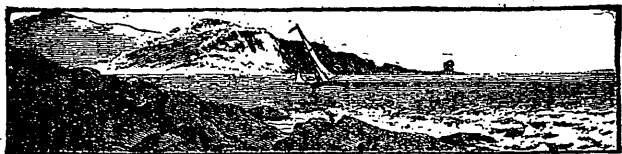
A word of burning blasphemy will grieve and anger the Almighty God, and a word of sin may poison other men; a word of trifling and folly may keep back others from good. Even if he both blesses and curses, like a spring sending out at the same place briny water and fresh, which is most unnatural, the good will not undo the bad; the lightest word is recorded against the great assize. It is a solemn thing to be a living soul and the master of a tongue.

LEARN:

1. *Keep your heart with all diligence.* Turn away your eyes from vanity, and shut your ears to sin. Take care the treasury of your heart is not filled up with evil things.

2. *Fill your heart with all goodness.* Be sure that if the word of Christ dwell in you richly it will, without fail,

Flow from your heart and fill your tongue,
Fill all your life with purest love,
And join you to the church above.



“What Will You Give Me?”

or

Doing Business for the Devil.

“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests and said unto them,

‘What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?’

And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.” (Matthew, twenty-sixth chapter, verses fourteen to sixteen.)

Judas saw a chance of making money. For the sake of silver he sold himself as well as his Master. Plenty of clever people, who think they shall gain by wickedness, find out too late that they are beggared forever.

I. A BAD BEGINNING.

1. *Secrecy.* Judas had to be sly, silent, separate in heart from the rest of the disciples, if he were to plot against Christ. His information, for which he thought he could get money, was only of value if all was kept dark. See him going off by night to the plotting priests, and yet back again to the company of his brethren, and even to dip his hand in the dish by the Master’s side.

What calls for trickery and double-dealing ends in shame and distress.

2. *Temper.* It is quite clear that while the greed of gain was the moving power in this wicked man's conduct, he was directly led to his bad bargain with the priests by his indignation at Mary's generous "waste" of the precious ointment, and our Lord's splendid commendation after his murmuring and blame. Beware of bad temper that will not be reprov'd, and that cannot bear to see others happy. Nothing makes the heart ready for Satan to enter sooner than "the sulks."

3. *Evil company.* Of all the men Judas might have been expected to keep clear of, these spiteful, crafty, and jealous Chief Priests were surely the best known to the twelve. They had proved themselves so often the bitter foes of our Lord.

It seems they did not approach Judas, but he took the trouble to seek them out. That night visit to them of the traitor is a wonderful picture to think over. "They were glad," says the record; so was all hell full of fearful glee.

It is a bitter thing when, for the sake of "business" or "money," people will run off into evil associations. Wilt thou help the wicked?

II. A BAD END.

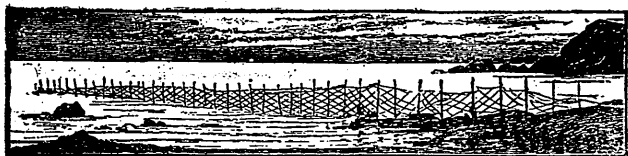
Judas wanted money, and he got it, but how little, and for how short a time! Thirty pieces of silver—why, it is a paltry sum, not half the worth of Mary's gift. When he got it home and counted it—.

Think! did those cursed coins ever go into "*the bag*" of the brotherhood? Was it his idea to give something to the poor or to repay by this desperate game some of the money, of which John said he was the "thief," before it was discovered? Anyhow,—

1. *He lost his money*, for he counted it out again and carried it back with horror, and wanted to repay it, as if by such a sacrifice he could undo his fearful work. Hear the jingle of it as it falls on the marble floor of the temple of God! How the devil cheats those who think by his help to cheat God!

2. *He lost his friends*. He had thrown up his "bishopricks" and brotherhood, and now the new friends he had made, who had been so glad to see him, and so pleasant, cast him off with sneers and contempt. "What is that to us? See thou to that." He had been their tool; what did they care for his distress now? It was hard to bear their taunts, and to feel that they cast all the responsibility of the crime upon him. This is still exactly the way of the world—heartless selfishness for those who are down.

3. *He lost his soul*. There are not many cases of self-murder mentioned in the Bible. It must always be looked upon as a most horrid crime. The picture of this man's death is abhorrent and fearful in the highest degree. The very place was called in after days, "the field of blood." What an awful end for the money-lover—"that he might go to his own place"; the "son of perdition," and yet the man who had been so near to the heirs of heaven.



“What Hour the Thief would Come.”

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching. Verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. (Luke, twelfth chapter, verses thirty-five to forty.)

Like Samuel, every one of you dwells in God's temple, and a bitter, crafty foe is watching always for a chance of getting in to quench the light of the lamp of God which is in your custody.

There are four weak places where you have specially

to set a watch, because through these he can come by some trick unless you prevent him. We will call this thief and destroyer *the Evil Spirit of Strong Drink*, and he will come, if possible, through the door of Hearing, or of Sight, of Smell, or of Taste. If you begin to listen to tales of the good qualities of drink in small doses and on special occasions, you may next want to look at it for yourself, and soon to get the fragrance of it, which some are first pleased with as others drink it in their company, and then to sip and taste it for yourself; and then the thief has got in, the temple is defiled, and will soon be in darkness.

So be sure and sing,—

“Cautious the doors of sense I close,
And keep them shut against my foes,
Who press to enter in.”

But I want to tell you when specially to guard ears and eyes, nose and mouth, against this foe, and what hour the thief will probably come to you.

I. WHEN IN COMPANY.

You are not perhaps in any danger if at home and alone, but you may forget yourself in a large company when others are drinking wine, and may begin to wish you could enjoy yourself as they seem to do. You won't see these happy drinkers some day, perhaps, when they have to let the thief be master of the house and their tormenter. Don't you let him get in when you are among friends.

II. WHEN TIRED,

Wine says, "I will make you fresh and strong again. You need a glass of something now. How faint you are."

Don't believe him. Get a glass of hot milk, or go to bed and sleep. Keep him out, or you will be tired of him some day, and will find no rest and no relief anywhere else.

III. WHEN VERY GLAD OR VERY SAD.

Excitement or joy or success will perhaps be a chance for him to come. Your side has won in football, and the others say, "Have a glass!" You are so delighted that you scarcely stop to think before the thief is at your lips. Or it is your birthday, or you are "out of your time" as an apprentice, or it is your sister's wedding, or perhaps even your own, and everybody says you must take a glass of wine to-day. Beware! this is the hour the thief will break in.

Or you have great trouble. You go to a funeral; it is very sad, everybody is in tears; the day is very cold, and the cemetery is certain to be exposed and chill, and perhaps you have got wet, and will have to sit in your wet clothes. "Just take a sip, it will cheer you and help you to bear up; you will not feel so faint or so cold." Alas for you, if this is your comfort at the grave side!—there may be another and a sadder funeral some day, perhaps there, and people will have to shed bitterer tears over you. Keep the thief and the murderer out.

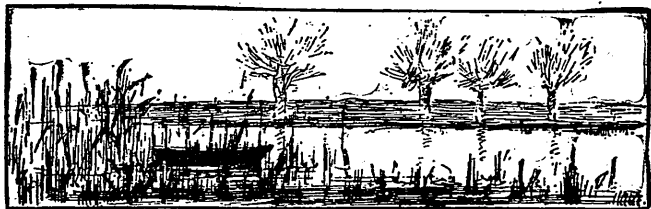
IV. WHEN YOU ARE ON A VISIT.

The thief says, "You must do like others here, or they will be offended. It is not polite to make your friends feel that you reflect upon them for taking a little wine by standing out and being a teetotaler. It is all right at home, but on a holiday and in a friend's house it is different."

Look out! Keep your head level: he's fooling you. Watch at this special hour, or he will be in, either through the door or window, or by a breach in the very wall of the house. This thief can be very bold and brazen at times, as well as crafty and insinuating.

V. AT CHRISTMAS TIME.

It is to be feared that more pledges are broken and good promises trodden under foot in the month of December than in any other of the twelve. All these other times mentioned before seem to come together at Christmas time, in the happy holidays. Young people lose their heads, and the foe gets in, and the breath of evil quenches the candle of the Lord; the golden candlestick is thrown down, and the light that is in them becomes darkness, how great! Then keep thy heart with all diligence against this evil spirit of drink. Touch not, taste not, handle not, lest ye perish by the way.



Children's Idols.

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

1 John 5: 21.

They say that Athens was so full of idols that it was easier for St. Paul to find a god there than to find a man. I once heard a great preacher say that in London now there are more idols than there ever were in Athens. So it seems all the idolaters have not gone yet.

I know people will say that men and women now-a-days fall down and worship *gold*, and make that their god; not cast into the figure of a calf (as at Mount Sinai), but in little round bits which we use as money. Never mind what great and clever and bad men and women worship; have boys and girls any idols, do you think? Do you think you are all quite converted from idolatry, and that God sees that you worship Him alone? I mean do you really keep the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"?

I. A BOY'S IDOLS.

To help you to answer the question, I will set down a few things that I have known some boys really worship—that is, they have thought more of them than they have thought of God, and they could not live and

be happy without them. These things had their best thoughts and their heart:—

(1) A FOOTBALL.—Once there appeared in a paper a picture of a number of lads kneeling on the ground all round a football and joining in a prayer, “Glory be to thee, O football!” They were worshipping it outwardly; but heart-worship is what God forbids too. If a boy neglects his duty, disobeys his teacher, dishonors his parents, and loses his money to play football, is it not his master and his god? If when he comes to Sunday-school or church, he is talking, or writing, or thinking about the match he played on Saturday afternoon rather than about God’s day, or His word, or His love, is not a football that boy’s idol?

(2) A PIPE.—Suppose a boy will tell a lie, and deceive his mother for a smoke; suppose he will go off to bed, and make an excuse not to kiss her lest she should smell his breath; suppose he should tell his sister or the younger brother never to say a word, though they know that he smokes, but he wants to make his father and mother believe that he does not,—is not the pipe his god? He thinks it will make him happy; it costs him money; it costs him sickness and suffering, perhaps, at first; it costs him truth; and even love, too, he gives away for it. Is not his pipe an idol, then? and don’t you think he pays rather too dearly for the worship of his little god?

(3) A PIGEON.—The Chinese worship cats, some people in India, monkeys, but many boys worship a pigeon. What do I mean? Why this: they will spend more

time over it by far than in reading God's holy Word; they will steal away the Sabbath hours in playing with it and flying it; they will quarrel over it, and, perhaps, even fight for it; they will walk miles and watch for hours to train it; they will boast of it, and tell lies for it, and even fight, if necessary, with their own friends for it. Is not that having it "*before*" God, which the very word of the first commandment forbids? Whatever comes between a boy and God may be an idol, and these idols are very hard to keep yourself from, though they are so little, if once they get into your heart and build their nest there. They can coo and cling, and it is very difficult to hunt them out and make them fly.

But now what about

II. A GIRL'S IDOLS,

for the text is just as much for them as for the boys. Rachel tried to hide her little silver gods by sitting upon them, and girls often do the same now-a-days by calling them by other names. I will set out in the daylight, however, three classes, and see if their right name is not that which old St. John gave them—IDOLS.

(1) ORNAMENTS.—If a girl will rather sit and mope than go to church or to a friend's house because she cannot wear some trinket; if she will pout and be bad-tempered because she cannot get a new pair of gloves; if she is elated, and delighted, and full of spirits, because she has a new hat or necktie; if she loses her temper because a damp morning puts her hair out of

curl; if she takes affront because she is passed by and not admired; if she is jealous of another girl because she is better dressed or more noticed than herself,—what estimate does she put upon ornaments? No doubt they are the idols of her heart. Life would be another thing to her without them. She may try to deceive herself, but she keeps them as the apple of her eye, and can as ill bear them to be touched. They are her gods.

(2) PETS.—Do you know a girl who cannot be happy unless she is fondling a dog, or nursing a cat? who will neglect the care of her mother, and leave at any time the charge of her baby brother, to stroke the kitten and feed it, and make it comfortable? who never has any patience to teach the poor little boys and girls in her own locality or in the Sunday-school, but plenty of time to comb, and clean, and feed, and lead out her pretty little spaniel? Write down her name as an idolater, for she knows very well she worships and serves the creature more than the Creator who is blessed for ever.

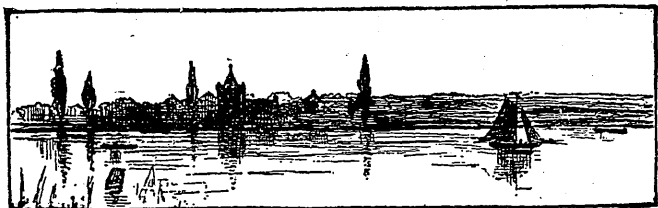
(3) AMUSEMENTS.—There are such a lot of little gods belonging to this class that I am almost afraid to bring it in; but I must, for, more than anything else, harmless amusements fill up hearts that ought to be the temples of the true God. Suppose a girl lies in bed in the morning reading a nice book, when she ought to be up and busy helping mother in the house or about her school work, is not that book an idol? It quite spoils her morning devotions, and crowds God out of her mind. Suppose she does fancy work because it is nice and

easy, instead of other work which is set for her; or sits at the piano when she is badly wanted elsewhere, will not music's charm bewitch and steal her heart away from God?

If you are an idolater, dear boy or girl, let me say,—

1. Remember those who worship idols become like unto them.
2. Pray tear out your idol from your heart, and break it before Christ's cross.
3. Work hard, and set your heart on things above.





The Sort of Man that wlll Make a Mighty Preacher.

“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God, He stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the people out of the ship.

Now when He had left speaking, He said unto Simon, ‘Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.’

And Simon answering said unto Him, ‘Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.’

And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, ‘Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.’ For he was astonished, and all that

were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon.

And Jesus said unto Simon, 'Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.'

And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him." (Luke, fifth chapter, verses one to eleven.)

St. Paul saw in young Timothy such marks as he considered "prophecies going before on him." What can we see in Peter which show a great preacher in the bud?

I. HE COULD WORK.

When he had poor luck in fishing, he did not give up in one hour or two, but went on right through the night, casting, and drawing, and watching the nets. And in the morning he did not feel so disheartened as to fold his hands or waste time in grumbling to others, but went on to wash and cleanse the nets so as to be ready again at the first opportunity to go to sea.

The gifts of energy and patience—"sticktion" they are called now-a-days—are a fine basis of character. See how Peter sticks to his work when the fish are netted; how he gets his partners also to help, till, notwithstanding the breaking net—which would have discouraged some men—both the boats are filled with the squirming fish, down to the water's edge.

II. HE COULD LISTEN.

See him, with his nets all aboard and clean, keeping the boat in position with an oar, as he drinks in the

great Teacher's word and marks its wonderful effect upon the vast crowd on the sands. Who with a soul in him could be in that boat and not long for the power to preach, too? Peter was silently learning how to do it by listening.

They are not likely to make great preachers who do not know one when they hear him.

III. HE COULD OBEY.

"Thrust out a little," said Jesus.

Some people would have wanted to argue the point first. "They will never hear you," "The boat is better here as it is, quite firm and steady."

There are lots of people who have no idea that a preacher can tell best where his pulpit ought to be; and it is a thing they always argue about, both in the church and the open air, till the critical moment is lost. Peter obeys.

"Let down your nets" is the second word of command, and another test, too. Human nature could not forbear just one word here, but the "I will" came before the end of the sentence. Few men know so much better than others as fishermen. Their art is nearly all the result of personal observation and a sort of instinct, so that they hate to be told what to do. Peter had a heart humble enough to yield obedience to One who was called a carpenter, though he himself was a professional fisher and knew his work.

IV. HE COULD REASON.

That marvellous draught of fishes was to this man far

more than a chance. He could see at once the relation between cause and effect, and knew that such an effect required a superhuman cause. The power above man that had drawn the crowds of eager people to listen to Christ's gracious words, and to yield obedience to His law, was as much demanded for this. Christ to him was divine. Without the perception and discernment of the finger of God, others might gather in those fish, but Peter could not.

An open eye and ready mind to draw conclusions are not always as "common to man" as one might suppose. But "thought" is inseparable from a great fisher of men.

V. HE COULD FEEL.

See him falling down—strong, busy man, his heart was touched, and very deeply.

A shallow nature would have said, "I am a lucky man," or "I am a clever man," or "I am a well repaid man." A worldly nature would have exclaimed, "I have a good haul. Soul, take thine ease." Peter said, "I am a sinful man." This is the natural cry of one who can feel the presence of God. How many have hearts, but they feel not?

There never was a great preacher yet who did not need the cheering word spoken to him in moments of overwhelming feeling, "FEAR NOT." God helps His servants to forget their own unworthiness and deep distress at the sight of all undeserved success by the promise "Thou shalt see greater things than these."

Those who are going to be great workers for God need not fear to look for such success in their earthly trade as shall make it worth the Lord's while to spiritualize their occupation. What a tent-maker of men for the Holy Spirit's in-dwelling did Paul become! What a collector and recorder of precious things for the public good of the church was Matthew in his gospel!





Bezaleel, a Study for Bright Boys.

And Moses said unto the children of Israel,

“See, the LORD hath called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah; and He hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in the cutting of stones, to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of cunning work. And He hath put in his heart that he may teach, both he, and Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan. Them hath He filled with wisdom of heart, to work all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the cunning workman, and of the embroiderer, in blue, and in purple, in scarlet, and in fine linen, and of the weaver, even of them that do any work, and of those that devise cunning work.” (Exodus, thirty-fifth chapter, verses thirty to thirty-five.)

As the tabernacle was to be built and furnished, three things were necessary—First, an architect’s plan; for nothing of the sort had been erected in the world before, so far as we know, except idol temples. The plan, all in detail and complete, God Himself had prepared, and showed it to Moses on the Mount. Second, materials of all kinds for the erection and fitting up of the same.

These things the people brought, and in such quantity that it produced embarrassment. But, third, some man was needed who was artist, designer, workman, and teacher enough to carry out the work. Without him the plans and the materials could never evolve the tabernacle of God. Where was he to come from?

I. GOD ALWAYS HAS A MAN READY WHEN HE IS
WANTED.

No sooner were the gifts offered for the building than the name of Bezaleel was heard. He was called by name, as Samuel and John and Saul of Tarsus were. God calls men, not only to preach, but also to build, and engrave, and weave, and plough, and sow the corn, and thresh it. The gift of men to the world is the greatest gift of the ascended and glorified Savior, but great men are not discovered till their work is ready for them to do.

II. THOSE WHO WANT TO BE CLEVER MEN MUST BE
GOOD.

Would God's Spirit have rested upon Joseph and given him such judgment if he had not lived a pure life? or could David have so skillfully played with his hand on the harp as to charm the moody king had he been jealous or mean himself? or would Paul have been able to do all things through Christ strengthening him had he been idle and murmuring? Bezaleel was filled with the Holy Ghost, so he must have been a holy man. The Spirit who made Jeremiah and John mighty proph-

ets, made them holy. Consecrated talent alone can really help the work of God.

III. THOSE WHO WANT TO BE USEFUL MAY PRAY FOR THE BEST GIFTS.

You cannot ask for too much if you want to use it for God. This man found that God could touch the brain and fill him with new ideas—that He was the God of the hand as well as of the tongue, and could give skill in graving and cutting and carving, as well as in designing curious and cunning things.

If you have to learn Latin or Geometry, pray about it. If you have to dress a window, or clean a watch, or tend looms, or make up accounts, pray over your work. He who made man's mouth and likes to hear him speak or sing well, made his eye and can improve it, his fingers and can give them touch and movement. How much the voice, the ear, the hand, the wrist can be improved by care and prayer only those know who walk with God, and believe that slovenliness is irreverence.

IV. THOSE WHO HAVE THE BEST GIFTS MUST USE THEM WELL.

(1.) *Bezaleel knew how to work.*

Some are able but idle, and do nothing much for lack of effort. The works he did are enumerated in the Bible, and it is expressly stated that at the finish Moses looked upon all the work, and behold, they had done it as the Lord commanded; and Moses blessed them.

(2.) *He was able to work with others.*

Some clever men do not like a partner, but God gave

Bezaleel a helper in the person of Aholiab, a man of another tribe, and far removed from that of Judah in thought and feeling.

(3.) *He could teach others also.*

Many gifted men are selfish and impatient, and so make very poor teachers. Unless they write books, their learning and genius will perish with them. It is a mark of grace joined with gifts when the good Spirit puts it into a man's heart that he may teach.

Let bright boys be ready when they are called to do any great work which is needed to be done, and instead of saying "I can't," say "I will pray about it, and do my best."





A Wonderful Tree.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples." (John, fifteenth chapter, verses one to eight.)

The Bible speaks of three wonderful trees, or four—two in the Garden of Eden (Knowledge and Life), and one in the Paradise of God on both sides of the marvellous river. This tree, however, in the lesson is most wonderful of all, and probably its size and its continuance are as wonderful as any other points that I can

mention. But in these verses there are four wonders that must be first referred to.

I. ITS ROOT AND STEM.

The root and support of this wonderful tree is Jesus Christ Himself. In the first Psalm the just man is likened to a tree planted by the rivers of water. This tree was planted by God's own right hand. Its origin can never be traced—it is from everlasting to everlasting. All that was ever good and lovely in this world has sprung out of this root, and is sustained by it.

II. ITS BRANCHES.

The root is invisible, but the branches can be seen. They are all the good and wise and holy people who depend upon and serve our Lord Jesus.

These branches are united to Him very wonderfully. Did you ever notice how strangely the branches of a vine grow out of the stem—different from other trees? That suggests how those that love Jesus are related to Him.

The branches are of all sizes and of various appearances, but they all live by their union with Him. However close they may be to each other, they will die unless united to the Stem and Root. His life is in each one of them always, or else they perish.

III. THE CULTIVATOR.

The Hand that planted this marvellous tree, which can be seen now in all the world, still cares for it. God the Father of Heaven keeps His loving eye upon it

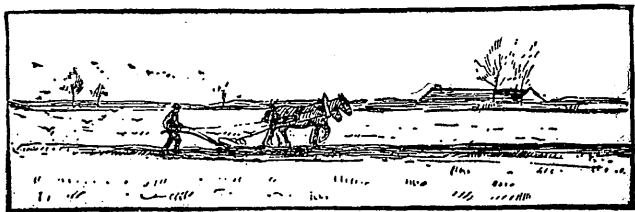
night and day lest anyone hurt it. A great many enemies have tried to damage the tree—the wild boar out of the woods, and the fierce and wicked haters of all good. Many a branch has been lopped off by wicked hands, but the tree grows and spreads still. The Vine-dresser watches every branch and twig. If the blight gets on one He cleans it; if another is too feeble He props it; if another is too rank He prunes it; all those that are fruitful He rejoices in, and especially when the fruit is fully ripe and brought to perfection.

IV. THE FRUIT

is of a sort that grows on no other tree in the world. If you want to know exactly what it is, you must read the full description, written by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Galatians, who lived, as you know, in the country where the other vines grew in plenty. He gives a proper list: "Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." In all these there is not one action such as praying, fasting, giving, but only dispositions and tempers of the heart, which only God will create.

Please remember this tree stands for Christ and His Church, because it is

1. UNITY IN DIVERSITY.
2. VISIBLE.
3. FRUITFUL.
4. GROWING.
5. UNCHANGEABLE IN CHARACTER.



"I am Jesus."

"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, 'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?'

And he said, 'Who art thou, Lord?'

And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.'

And he trembling and astonished said, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?'

And the Lord said unto him, 'Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.'

And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink." (Acts, ninth chapter, verses one to nine.)

When the Governor of Egypt declared to the terrified brothers, "I am Joseph!" it was no greater surprise to them than it was to the mad, raging Saul of Tarsus when he saw that Just One and heard His voice. He thought he knew Jesus of Nazareth just as Joseph's brethren thought they knew the great and stately Zaphnath-Paaneah, but did he?

The following four things Saul learned that day, and spent his whole life afterwards in teaching to others:—

I. "I AM JESUS—THE LIVING ONE."

He became the greatest witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. All his reported sermons and his letters show that he constantly set forth this: "Jesus is alive. He died and rose again"—that was his gospel—"Jesus and the resurrection"—everywhere. Jesus was to St. Paul a living, bright reality, always near and accessible.

II. "I AM JESUS—THE LOVING ONE."

What saith the answer of God unto him? "It is hard for thee to kick against the goads." Not—"I will punish thee for this. I will take vengeance upon such a persecutor. I will harden your heart and cast you down into destruction." A word of gentle sympathy. "You are hurting yourself, tearing your own flesh, breaking your own heart. I feel for you, for the pain and distress you endure. As I love you, I would save you from self-inflicted pain. It is of no use to fight against the nature of things, you cannot alter that;

cease the foolish, bootless strife." How gracious the word to the fierce bigot with the blood of Stephen on his raiment, and the letters of Caiaphas in his pocket!

III. "I AM JESUS—THE SUFFERING ONE."

It would be a shock to Saul to know that all the beating, and stoning, and threatening of the believers was in reality a beating, and stoning, and threatening of Jesus Christ, but that question "Why persecutest thou me?" would teach him all this and much more. If you could trace out the effect of this great thought upon Paul's mind all through his life, as shown in his works and his epistles, you would be much surprised.

No other writer or speaker of the New Testament speaks as he does of the relation between our Lord and His people, or shows so clearly how, because they are "members of His body," Christians should love and help and consider each other in all things, great and small.

IV. "I AM JESUS—THE RULING ONE."

He appeared to Saul as Master and Lord. The reply was, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" In his letters Paul calls himself the servant or "bondslave" of Jesus Christ. His one idea of life was the loving service of the Savior. He had no idea till then that Jesus had any claim upon him for obedience, but when once he had learned that He was his Jesus—his Joshua or Savior—he could delight to say, "Jesus Christ, who loved me and gave Himself for me." He was not disobedient to the heavenly calling, and probably no single

even in the history of the, Christian church since the resurrection of Christ has so powerfully impressed the church and the world as this event of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, to whom it was said,

“I AM JESUS!”

But it was an honest and good heart into which that word of love and power fell and was received, or it would not have thus brought forth a hundredfold.





Provoking One Another.

Galatians 5: 21.

Children, do you know what St. Paul means? Think: do you? Provoking one another means "*teasing one another.*" Do you know what that means? Teasing may begin in fun, but if it goes far or keeps on long it will nearly kill that sweet angel with L-O-V-E on her forehead, and out of her blood will spring up a fierce and fiery dragon called P-R-I-D-E, who will fill any home with lamentation, and mourning and woe.

PROVOKING OR TEASING IS

I. CRUEL.

It is a bad heart that likes to give pain, and it gets worse with the exercise. If your brother has a thin skin, why should you make your tongue like a bunch of nettles to keep whipping him with? To try to get other people to laugh at your sister, or to frighten her, or to make her look or feel unhappy is a cruel trick. We ought to try to please one another, and that is more manly than to tease.

Do you think that Jesus Christ ever teased anybody in all His life? No; but the devil loves to terrify and vex, even when he cannot hurt.

I saw a boy one day treat a little kitten as he would never treat a bulldog. Why? Why don't you tease

the big dog as much as the kitten? Shall I tell you why? Because you are a coward.

II. EASY.

It does not take a clever boy to be a tease. A wasp can sting, a goose can hiss, an ass can kick. Those who have not great discernment can find out what brother or sister does not like. A sneer, a look, a touch, a whisper—any one of them can give pain.

Teasing does not make a great noise either. Very horrid unkindness can be done behind father's and mother's backs, and there may be many hot tears shed when nobody sees. It does want a bit of sense and knowledge to bind up and heal a broken heart, but to cut and kick and crush it may be the work of any clown; but it is

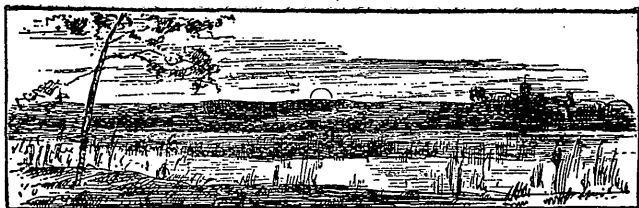
III. DANGEROUS.

1. Those who try to provoke others get hardened and wicked hearts. Sin is sure to find them out. They will be lowered and made more like the father of all murderers if they do his work.

2. They may make those they tease so angry as to do some very wicked thing. All sorts of crimes have resulted from teasing. Those who provoke others may therefore make not only sinners but criminals. When you laugh at a boy, or hinder him, or vex him, no one can tell where it will end. You may spoil his temper, and he may spoil something besides your clothes.

Learn, and repeat, and remember the application now of this short chapter—it is short, polite, and profound—

PLEASE DO NOT TEASE.



“Thy Servant.”

“And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli.

And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision.

And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see; and ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep; that the LORD called Samuel. And he answered, ‘Here am I.’

And he ran unto Eli, and said, ‘Here am I; for thou calledst me.’

And he said, ‘I called not; lie down again.’

And he went and lay down.

And the LORD called yet again, ‘Samuel.’

And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, ‘Here am I; for thou didst call me.’

And he answered, ‘I called not, my son; lie down again.’

Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, neither was the word of the LORD yet revealed unto him.

And the LORD called Samuel again the third time.

And he arose and went to Eli, and said, ‘Here am I; for thou didst call me.’

And Eli perceived that the LORD had called the child. Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, 'Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth.' So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

And the LORD came, and stood, and called as at other times, 'Samuel, Samuel.'

Then Samuel answered, 'Speak; for thy servant heareth.' " (1 Samuel, third chapter, verses one to ten.)

When the boy Samuel uttered these words he was putting on a yoke—it was an easy yoke, of course, but it was the yoke of God. When he said to God, "THY SERVANT," he meant, "MY MASTER." It was just the same as when Saul, outside the walls of Damascus, who had so long been kicking against the goads of the true and only Master, Jesus Christ, said for the first time:

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

That word "Lord!" placed him under the yoke for life; from that moment he was the servant, literally "bondsmen," of Jesus Christ, as he signs himself in so many of his epistles.

Before this, the little white robed minister in the tabernacle belonged to God, but he did not yet know God as his own Lord and Master; he had not yet heard His word to him. Consider:—

(1) HIS NAME, Samuel, which means "God-called-for," would always remind him that he was born in answer to prayer.

(2) HIS RESIDENCE, God's temple, would constantly

show him that he had been "lent" to God by his father and mother that he might wait upon Him as long as he lived.

(3) HIS LITTLE COAT, made like a priest's garment, though he was not a priest by birth of Aaron's family, would remind him of his mother's best efforts, renewed every year, to make him God's servant.

But all this time "he ministered before Eli." He was Eli's servant. If he opened or shut the doors, if he trimmed the lamp or carried the offerings, Samuel did all to please Eli. He never thought of anything beyond that till now. Eli called him "Son," and Samuel ran to him and told him every whit, and gave him reverence. Samuel knew nothing more than God's word through another man, but now he says to God,

"THY SERVANT!"

He steps out to the front for himself, and takes his own work from God's hand.

This is just what we want you to do. Listen to God's voice behind and below your teacher's. Remember that you, like Samuel, were long ago devoted to the service of God, that you, too, have been brought up to His temple, every Sabbath at least, for service, so that He has a special right to call upon you. The time has come when you should answer for yourself. You are old enough now to know the Voice of God, and you need not be afraid to answer back to the divine call. If you are willing to listen further and to obey, say now in your heart to God,

“BEHOLD THY SERVANT!”

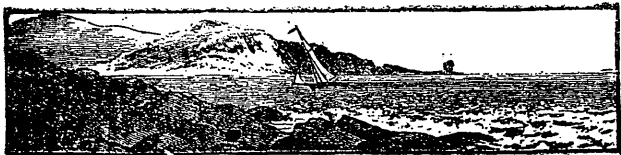
He will hear the softest whisper.

God is longing to find willing ears and willing hearts. His service is perfect freedom. You have not understood the sweet voice perhaps which has been ringing in your heart, but now know that it is Christ Himself who comes and stands and calls that you may follow Him.

Recollect, if you are His servant you must

- 1—Have no other master.
- 2—Obey Him in all things.
- 3—Serve Him with others.





“Give Attendance to Reading.”

1 Timothy 4: 13.

Paul was a reader himself. In his letter written after this to Timothy, he says: “Bring the books, and especially the parchments.” It is true that Timothy had, from his boyhood, known the holy writings, but the apostle was anxious that he should still be a reader.

There are many reasons why boys and girls should love reading, and always seek good books. I will now mention three of them.

I. FOR COMPANIONSHIP.

A good book is often like a good friend. Those who do not love reading may take to gambling, or smoking, or worse, for want of society; but those who love reading can always be in the best society, and never lonely. A great man said, “My books are the companions of my solitude.”

If you read *a noble book* over and over again, you will drink in the mind and heart of the writer, and after that you will not want low companionships. A good book is better than any game of chance.

II. FOR INFORMATION.

“Read, and you will know!” said one wise mother always to the inquiries of her little son, and the habit his

mother taught him, of looking into books for everything, made him a full man. Those who love knowledge must be fond of books. In these days, even more than in the days of Timothy, all young disciples must give attention to reading.

III. FOR INSPIRATION.

Of course the Bible must be read, but there are also very many other good books, both of prose and poetry, to read, which will elevate and strengthen your mind. Some reading defiles and lowers the mind, but books of that sort you must shun. We read in the book of Acts of a great bonfire of books, and it would be a grand thing if the bad books in London and New York and other great cities could be brought out and burnt up like that, but *books of truth and purity* must be read by all who would have noble and beautiful thoughts.

I will give you now three directions for reading the Word of God:—

1. READ IT DAILY.

Not a day without a line at least. Your regular portion hide in your heart. Get, if possible, your morning and your evening text. Give attention to this reading, and keep asking yourself, as you open and close the book “Understandest thou what thou redest?”

2. READ IT ON YOUR KNEES.

Nobody will ever understand and delight in the law of the Lord who does not read it with prayer. Study and thought can never take the place of faith and

prayer. Those who want really to know the will of God, and to do it, must say, "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."

3. READ IT ALOUD.

It is surprising how badly many young, and some old, people read the Bible when asked to do so aloud. You should give attendance to reading in this way for the sake of others, as well as for your own sake. Do you recollect the text, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this book"? Will you get that peculiar blessing if you do not try?



Anchors—False and True.

“God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.” (Hebrews, sixth chapter, verses seventeen to twenty.)

You all know what an anchor is like, and what it is for. You know what it is made of, and perhaps you have seen an old, rusty broken one lying on the sand or shingle at the seaside. A broken, castaway anchor suggests to some people a great many thoughts.

Everybody who, like the writer of this epistle, has been to sea, knows the value of a good anchor. We read in the book of Acts, “They cast four anchors out of the stern and wished for the day.” Hundreds of precious lives have before now depended upon the strength of a vessel’s anchors. If there were no rocks, no storms, no tides, a ship might, perhaps, sail away in safety, without an anchor; but every time you see an

anchor you must remember it means danger and need, however smooth and pleasant the sea may be just at that present moment.

Because there are storms, rocks, fogs, and shoals, we who are voyaging upon the sea of life require a good anchor, too, if we are to gain the port at last.

I. FALSE ANCHORS.

Some voyagers are deceived, and carry only false anchors that are certain to fail in the stress of life's storm. Let me tell you what they are,—

1. Good feelings.
2. Good works.
3. Good resolutions.
4. Good friendships.

These four anchors are sure to drag and give way when the great storms arise. They always have done, and they always will. They look very pretty in the sunshine, and when all is fine, but they cannot hold when heart and flesh fail, and the spirit is overwhelmed. Unless David had had something better than these in the shape of an anchor, he would never have lived to say, "All thy waves and thy billows have gone over me."

II. THE TRUE ANCHOR.

It is HOPE. Hope which God has given, and which is fixed upon the person and the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, and now lives again for us in the presence of God.

Recollect these five things about the true anchor:—

1. *All other anchors go down, this goes up.*
2. *All other anchors are made by man, this is God-given.*
3. *All other anchors may drag and fail, this never.*
4. *All other anchors fasten to God's footstool, this to His throne.*
5. *All other anchors fasten themselves, this is fastened by the Forerunner within the Veil.*

If you are in the ship of which Jesus is the pilot, the Scriptures the compass, Hope the anchor, and Faith the cable, however you may be tossed and driven, you will never be wrecked or become a castaway on the voyage of life.





Spoilers.

“And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim.

And they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the LORD to anger, and they forsook the LORD, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.

And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and He sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for evil, as the LORD had said, and as the LORD had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.

Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.” (Judges, second chapter, verses eleven to sixteen.)

An old preacher used to be very fond of the text, “Beware lest any man spoil you,” and he could speak very strongly indeed about “a spoilt man”—not a spoilt picture, or palace, but a spoilt man.

You have sometimes seen that very ugly thing, and

that very unhappy thing, a spoilt child. If there is one such here, I am very sorry for him, and for all who live in the same house; but there are some boys and girls that are worse than *spoilt* children, they are SPOILERS. They do harm to others, and it is of such I want to speak from this one word. Think what damage these spoilers do.

I. THEY SPOIL CLOTHES.

Their own by bad usage, and others whenever they can. Their caps they throw about; their shoes they soak in water, snow, or mud; their coats or dresses they tear and rub to pieces. Every mother knows which of the boys and girls is the greatest spoiler in the house. Books, too, and toys, and everything they handle they manage to spoil—so they are like the locusts wherever they come. This matter, however, is the least I shall mention.

II. THEY ARE SPOILERS OF SPEECH.

Their own words are rough, and perhaps slangy, and, alas! sometimes false or vile, so that they are sure to spoil the speech of others by teaching them evil ways of talking. They not only break down and spoil the English language, but they spoil the fair, honest, pure speech of their companions and friends, and it is often very easy to distinguish the effect of one such spoiler in a family or even in a school—one sinner destroyeth much good. Behold, how great matter a little fire kindleth.

If they are cross and spiteful, they soon set others by

III. THEY SPOIL GOOD TEMPER.

the ears. If they are selfish, they are sure to make kind and generous companions suspicious. If they are jealous they make happy, simple-hearted people miserable. Before now a whole room full of happy playmates has been turned into a weeping-place by one of these spoilers coming, and even a schoolroom or a dormitory has seemed like a prison or place of torture by the presence of a single spoiler. Everybody could be happy without them, but none could be happy with them.

IV. THEY SPOIL GOOD LOOKS.

Surely sad children, with knitted brows and pouting lips, cannot be as pretty as those with beaming smiles and happy, sparkling eyes. Besides, bad words, bad thoughts, deceit, passion, anger, envy, variance, all somehow get written on the face and make the countenance dark. "Goodly to look to" is the picture of one who is good. An evil eye and a proud look God hates.

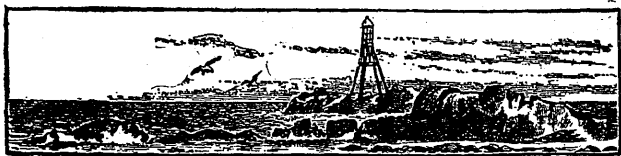
V. THEY SPOIL HABITS.

A good habit is worth more than rubies, but some are bad enough to be spoilers of these. The habits of early rising, obedience, prayer, industry, have all been spoiled before now by one bad companion.

"Before Charlie came to see us," mother says, "George used to help me in every way, and used to be so kind and thoughtful for his sister, and used to be so quiet and gentle in the house, but it is all changed now!" Yes, because Charlie is a *spoiler*; that's the reason.

Boys and girls, don't be spoilers, like these heathens in the lesson. Be helpers, keepers, saviors. Make others better, not worse. To spoil is to do the work of that enemy who got into Eden; to save is to follow in the footsteps of the Son of God.





Fight for the Right.

“In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, came Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem, and besieged it.

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim, king of Judah, into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god.

And the king spake unto Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; children in whom was no blemish, but well favored, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.

And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof they might stand before the king.

Now among these were the children of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishaël, and Azariah.

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor

with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, 'I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.'

Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 'Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink, then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.'

So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

And at the end of ten days their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink; and gave them pulse.

As for these four children, God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." (Daniel, first chapter, verses one to seventeen.)

The story of young Daniel's loyalty to conscience ought to make many heroes to-day, Consider,—

I. THE HERO HIMSELF.

A captive boy—probably an orphan—in a strange land, beautiful, gifted, educated, a graduate in science, tenderly nurtured, probably of royal David's blood. As much alone as any boy going forth to school or college, and almost certainly regarded with envy by the native race. There he is at court, to be treated as the king's son, and to be fed from his table. What a chance for pride to assert itself, and for Daniel to gain the whole world! It lay before him as it did before Moses when he saw the treasures in Egypt and the pleasures of sin.

Consider next

II. THE BATTLE HE FOUGHT.

(1) *With pride.* It was a great thing to have such a chance of honor; to be selected for such society and position; and especially to such a clever youth, for such training; but so loyal was his heart to God that he was ready to forego them all rather than do wrong. "Daniel purposed in his heart" to stand alone—to stand down, to go back to his obscurity and captivity rather than soil his conscience. How long he had prayed in secret for such courage and strength we may imagine.

(2) *With taste.* Certainly the dainties of Nebuchadnezzar's table were not to be despised, especially by a young prince; and when it is recollected how strong was the ancient opinion that good living and wine tend to physical and mental development, no

doubt Daniel would be subject to severe temptation and much ridicule and a great deal of persuasion in reference to his resolve, but he stood firm in his heart against the lust of the flesh, as he had done against the lust of the eye and the pride of life. But there was another difficulty in his way: he had to struggle

(3). *With love*, and probably this was the hardest of all. God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the chief man of the court, the master and prince of the officers. As he had shown Daniel such special favor, it must have been a painful thing for the lad to have to set himself in opposition to such a great man's authority and wishes. However, it is clear that he boldly spoke of the matter, and it went so far as for that great official to declare to the youth that it seemed as if he would rather sacrifice his friend's head than give up his scruples; and it seems he dismissed the matter, for Daniel then went to Melzar, the attendant, and negotiated the terms of a temporary experiment. Only those who have had, for conscience sake, to bring distress to loving but prejudiced friends, can understand what this battle cost young Daniel's sensitive heart. However, look at

III. THE VICTORY GOD GAVE HIM.

(1) *He kept a clear conscience and an undefiled body.*

Such a jewel in such a casket is, in the sight of God, of great price, and is not secured by any without sacrifice. That a *fairer* countenance should follow fellowship

with God is natural, that a "*fatter*" face should follow a pulse and water diet was, by the special mercy of heaven to all parties concerned, in answer to prayer.

(2) *His faith saved and strengthened his three young companions.*

Had Daniel failed in that test, the world had never heard of the burning, fiery furnace, and of those who quenched the violence of fire by their faith. The leader of this class of four is afterwards addressed by an angel as, "O man greatly beloved!"

(3) *They four took the highest places at Court.*

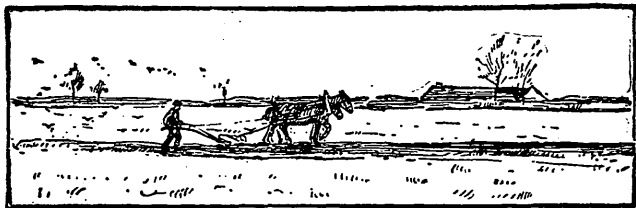
This brought great honor and joy to Ashpenaz, who had loved Daniel so well, and very great advantage to the State, for the king did not keep these near him because they were fair or good, but because they were worth to him ten times more than all the other men he could get. Remember,

1. High thinking and low living go hand in hand.

2. He who would fight for God and man must first conquer self.

3. Daniel might be photographed for a likeness of Wisdom—despised and rejected of men, but afterwards seen "in her right hand length of days and in her left hand riches and honor."

4. Come into Daniel's band to-day.



“ A Present for Esau.”

Genesis 32: 13.

Wise Jacob not only prayed to God for help, but did his best to turn away the fury of his angry brother, Esau, whom he had wronged. The girl who prays for help in learning her lessons, and does not take pains and try hard to do her best, is probably breaking that strange command, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” We must pray as if we could do nothing, and we must act as if we have never prayed at all.

Presents are generally pleasant to receive, and sometimes they are pleasant to give. It is a poor, selfish life in which there are no gifts, especially between brothers and sisters, or no gifts in the interests of peace and goodness.

There are three kinds of presents:—

I. A PRESENT THAT YOU GIVE FOR YOUR OWN SAKE.

“If I don’t give him something, I shall not get a present when my birthday comes,” says one boy.

“Perhaps I shall want him to do me a favor some day, so now I will send him a gift in good time.”

This lively expectation of favors to come is a mean reason for making a present. To give a dollar with the hope of getting two back again, can scarcely be called

kindness. "Looking for nothing again" is the Savior's rule for making a gift, and this alone makes it golden before God or man.

II. A PRESENT THAT YOU MAKE FOR THE SAKE OF OTHERS.

This is of a much better quality. It is a good sign when we plan and try to give pleasure to others. It may be a gift of civility, a sort of compliment, as the bracelets and earrings given to Rebecca, or the spices, nuts, and almonds to Joseph, or the silver coin to Samuel, or the bread and wine and kid to Saul. Or it may be a gift of charity. But anyhow, as a mark of thoughtfulness for others, it has a beauty of its own. To send, like Jacob here, a gift to pacify and turn away the passion of an angry man, is a token of wisdom as well as of kindness. To prevent sin by a sweet and timely gift, out of a pure desire to save one's neighbor from evil, is truly Christ-like. To pass by and meddle with strife is like taking a dog by the ears, but to divert and engross the attention of the angry or snarling dog, till some disliked object has crossed his path, is a more excellent way. A gift in secret pacifieth anger, and a reward in the bosom turns away wrath.

But the wisest and best gift of all is,

III. A PRESENT THAT YOU MAKE FOR CHRIST'S SAKE.

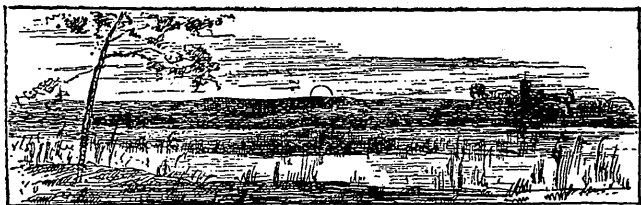
He is the Lord of love, and perhaps your present is prepared with the hope of increasing or making love manifest. It is well. He desires peace, and for its

sweet sake you present your gift—it is as incense before Him.

A gift for Christ's sake that people may think well of Him, and do Him reverence, and come to be His disciples, is precious indeed. Many a heart has been won for His service, by those who have carried a present, perhaps to the sick, for His sake. Mary's precious ointment has led multitudes to look at, and trust in, and love the Savior. So, carefully-given presents to the careless and worldly have often predisposed them to listen to those who would speak for Him. "A man's gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men." If you know how to go about it you may, by a wise gift, get a chance of introduction to someone that nobody else can speak to Jesus about. Pray for wisdom to see, and strength to do kind things to unlikely people, and some day you will be glad you have read this.

LESSON.

1. Be strictly honest, but if God gives you a chance of making a present, however small, never neglect it.
2. Recollect it is more blessed to give than to receive.
3. Know, and tell others, that kind echoes can never come before kind words and deeds.



“Why do Ye not Rather take Wrong?”

“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church.

I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers.

Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law with one another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren.” (First Corinthians, sixth chapter, verses one to eight.)

These people at Corinth did exactly what most people in this country do to-day—they tried to overcome evil with evil. They had not learned Christ’s rule of suffering patiently, or the Christian’s secret of a life of peace.

When anyone attacked them they gave him as much again; if someone wronged them they were determined to have their rights.

Now, this bad for bad, and resistance of injuries, and a kick for a blow was exactly opposite to the law and the life of Christ. When He was reviled, He reviled not again. As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. What Paul asked these men and women at Corinth, let me ask you:—Why do ye not rather take wrong? I will tell you why you do not!

I. BECAUSE IT IS NOT PLEASANT.

Nobody likes to be teased, and hurt, and cheated; to be laughed at, or pushed about, especially by those who have no right whatever to do it.

But which is the most important, my feelings, or other people's improvement and the honor of God? If I get in a passion with a boy, and rail at him and strike him, I may make a bad temper worse, and may awaken bitter wrath and strife in my own heart. I had better bear a blow on the arm, or a poke in the ribs, or a sneer, or a bitter word, than have an evil passion aroused in my nature, which may make me wretched another day, or do that which God hates and forbids. Said a great soldier to a young man who had insulted him, "If I could wipe off your blood from my conscience as easily as I can wipe off this dirt from my clothes, sir, I would run you through with this sword." Better suffer anything than sin, or make others do so.

II. YOU THINK IT WON'T PAY.

"If I don't punish that boy for laughing at me, he will do it again," you say. But he is really far more likely to do it, or to get others to do it, if you punish him. "Take no notice" is generally the best rule. Peace-makers are, as a rule, the patient non-fighters, and it is wonderful how few boys will attack those who leave others alone. The boys who get most teased are the impatient and irritable, who fly into a passion if they are only just touched, and who want to have their own way. To get your own way, the best plan is to care nothing about it.

III. YOU SAY, "OTHERS DON'T DO SO."

Of course, they do not pretend to follow and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, but you do. That makes all the difference, you see. As you are His servant you must obey His commands. His command is, "Love one another"! Love worketh no ill, endureth all things. Remember who spake these words, "I say unto you, Resist not evil." Did He not know the best plan of overcoming evil, and the sure way of increasing it? "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight," He told Pilate, but He would have chosen a different sort of servants, and given them a different training.

If you want to save yourself and others from sin, you had better take wrong from others than render it again, and even when buffeted without fault, if you take it patiently, it is good and acceptable to God.

IV. BUT THE GREAT REASON IS, YOU GET ANGRY.

If you had a heart without anger, so that you really felt only the touch on your body, you would not often want to revenge yourself; and let me add, if you saw the sin of those who did the wrong, as Jesus did, you would pray, "Father, forgive them," instead of wanting to hit them back and only make them more miserable.

Please recollect these things when you are teased, or wronged, or badly hurt:—

1. It wants more courage to be patient and to bear injury quietly, than it does to strike back, and give way to spite and temper.

2. God will take the part of those who leave their wrongs in His hands. The quiet and gentle spirit can say, "Thou shalt answer for me, O Lord my God," or "O, Lord, I am oppressed; undertake thou for me."

3. Those who follow in Christ's footsteps, out of love for Him, and who thus suffer with Him, shall share His throne.



A Good Habit.

“He took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat.” (Acts, twenty-seventh chapter, verse thirty-five.)

Nearly everybody asks a blessing or gives thanks before or after eating sometimes, but unless it is a constant and fixed habit with us we may forget and omit it just when it is most important. When Dr. Adam Clarke sat at the Royal table, he rose to acknowledge his Master before King George of England, and it was because St. Paul invariably gave thanks to God at the table that in this time of excitement he did not forget or fear to do so on board that disabled ship, as St. Luke specially says, “in the presence of them all.”

We should sit down to the table praising God for these reasons:—

I. ALL OUR FOOD IS FROM GOD'S HAND.

Wonderful, is it not, that such different things should all come out of the ground? that such different tastes should be provided for us? The kindly fruits of the earth are not forbidden, but we may eat, and live, and enjoy them all.

II. WE MIGHT BE IN DANGER, IF WE FORGOT GOD, OF LOVING OUR FOOD TOO WELL.

Those who give God thanks will not eat anything bad, because they know that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and must be kept pure and strong for Him. They will not eat greedily, but will think of others, seeing that God has been so kind and good to them. They will not be over nice, remembering that what God hath cleansed they may not call common.

III. THOSE WHO SING PRAISE TO GOD AT TABLE WILL NOT GRUMBLE.

A merry heart, at table especially, does good, like a medicine. To frown, and sulk, and grumble, and quarrel over your food is both a sin and a blunder. Then every laugh, according to the old proverb, lengthens life. "They were all of good cheer," and so people ought to be when they take their meat from God, and give Him thanks. It is the happy, cheery folks who gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost.

IV. THOSE WHO GIVE THANKS AT TABLE SEE A PICTURE OF JESUS THREE OR FOUR TIMES A DAY.

Not only because He blessed when He brake bread, and so set Paul and all the rest of us so sweet an example, but because bread is the chosen likeness of Himself which lies on every table. "I am the Bread of Life, the Living Bread, the Bread of God," He says.

Think of Him, the Life of men, and feed on Him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

If you had a fine painting of the Last Supper, it could not help you better to remember Him than the loaf of bread on the table does, for that also is the gift of God, and the very thing He gave to the multitude in the desert place, as well as the apostles in the supper room, as a picture of Himself.

Always say grace, and if you can, sing thanks, not only for yourself but for all the creatures whose wants God's open hand supplies, and not for bare bread alone, but for Jesus, and for every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.





A Link in God's Chain

“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, ‘Ananias.’

And he said, ‘Behold, I am here, Lord.’

And the Lord said unto him, ‘Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, and hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias, coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.’

Then Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: and here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.’

But the Lord said unto him, ‘Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake.’

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.’

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." (Acts, ninth chapter, verses ten to eighteen.)

Between the work of the glorious Son of God and that of Paul the apostle, there comes the gentle ministry of the quiet and almost unknown Ananias of Damascus. He may be called, if not the Great, at any rate the Good Ananias, to distinguish him from others of that time. What do we know of him, and what may we learn from him?

I. HE WAS A MAN WHO LIVED CLOSE TO GOD.

God spoke to him in a vision, and he replied as though he were used to the speech of heaven. He was one fit to be sent on errands for God. He was one to be trusted with heaven's secrets. You hear people now and then say:

"Such a man or woman will be great some day, has a mission, is born to a great destiny."

How do they know? Perhaps, like Ananias, they hear the secrets of the skies. He could tell, if he would, the future course of Paul's life. He was a man without jealousy or revenge; he went to baptise the Apostle of the Gentiles, and called the man who came to bind and banish him, "brother."

II. ANANIAS WAS WELL SPOKEN OF AMONG MEN.

This is expressly stated, and those who have a good reputation should consider it as a talent to be used for

God. Had this good man been one who was disliked and looked on with suspicion, he would not have been a fitting messenger in this case, for no doubt his action would be strongly criticised afterwards by the Jews, both in Damascus and Jerusalem. Those who objected to Peter speaking to Cornelius, would certainly be offended by Ananias being the first of the brethren in Damascus to give the right hand of fellowship to Saul.

Let us learn,—

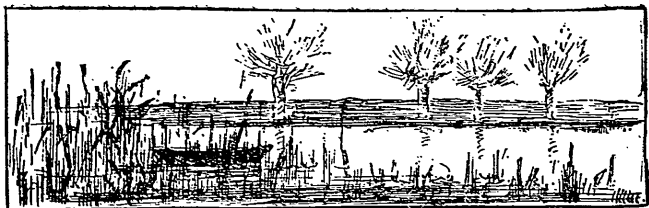
1. Those who have a special duty are given plain directions.

2. Those who have a special duty find the way all clearly prepared. Saul had heard the name of his friend and teacher before he came.

3. The greatest work for God is often done in private. The house of Judas, in Straight Street, Damascus, was the scene of an event which has influenced the thought and life of the world till now.

4. The greatest men of the church are often saved by the ministry of the obscure ones. Paul was not baptised by an apostle or a bishop. God often honors local preachers and cottage services.

5. Some prejudice or fear may be in our mind against those we are afterwards to be the means of helping.



What Makes a Man into a Prophet?

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deed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.'

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Both Isaiah and Jeremiah appear to have been called to the work of God in their youth. We only read in the Bible of one “old prophet,” and he is no credit to the fellowship. This chapter shows how God changed a priest into a prophet in a single day. Education and training may make youths into tolerable ministers and preachers, but a true prophet must have his call and his qualification from heaven. Here you may see, as in a glass, a pattern case of prophet-making. This young man had

I. A SIGHT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY.

To see clearly that God is really on the throne of the universe, a true and living King and Ruler, is the very foundation of a true prophet's call. Any indefiniteness here will be followed by some indifferentism as to the conduct or the future of others. No man can be a true prophet who does not see and feel that “The Lord is King over all the earth.”

And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized." (Acts, ninth chapter, verses ten to eighteen.)

Between the work of the glorious Son of God and that of Paul the apostle, there comes the gentle ministry of the quiet and almost unknown Ananias of Damascus. He may be called, if not the Great, at any rate the Good Ananias, to distinguish him from others of that time. What do we know of him, and what may we learn from him?

I. HE WAS A MAN WHO LIVED CLOSE TO GOD.

God spoke to him in a vision, and he replied as though he were used to the speech of heaven. He was one fit to be sent on errands for God. He was one to be trusted with heaven's secrets. You hear people now and then say:

"Such a man or woman will be great some day, has a mission, is born to a great destiny."

How do they know? Perhaps, like Ananias, they hear the secrets of the skies. He could tell, if he would, the future course of Paul's life. He was a man without jealousy or revenge; he went to baptise the Apostle of the Gentiles, and called the man who came to bind and banish him, "brother."

II. ANANIAS WAS WELL SPOKEN OF AMONG MEN.

This is expressly stated, and those who have a good reputation should consider it as a talent to be used for

God. Had this good man been one who was disliked and looked on with suspicion, he would not have been a fitting messenger in this case, for no doubt his action would be strongly criticised afterwards by the Jews, both in Damascus and Jerusalem. Those who objected to Peter speaking to Cornelius, would certainly be offended by Ananias being the first of the brethren in Damascus to give the right hand of fellowship to Saul.

Let us learn,—

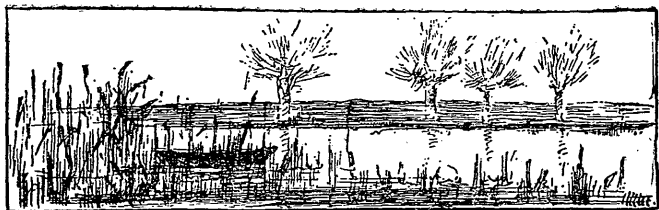
1. Those who have a special duty are given plain directions.

2. Those who have a special duty find the way all clearly prepared. Saul had heard the name of his friend and teacher before he came.

3. The greatest work for God is often done in private. The house of Judas, in Straight Street, Damascus, was the scene of an event which has influenced the thought and life of the world till now.

4. The greatest men of the church are often saved by the ministry of the obscure ones. Paul was not baptised by an apostle or a bishop. God often honors local preachers and cottage services.

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II. A SIGHT OF GOD'S HOLINESS.

The false prophet, Mahomet, saw and taught that God lived and ruled, but he did not know that He is holy. How solemnly this is shown to Isaiah! See the sacred messengers of fire; notice their faces veiled as if with a double scarf; hear their solemn voices each to the other; think of the trembling pillars of the temple responding to their cry, and the cloud of incense smoke which veiled both the throne and the seraphs, and made the prophet feel that he was still outside the holy place!

III. A CONVICTION OF HIS OWN SIN.

All true messengers of God have had to cry over their own pollution, and, like Job, that perfect man, to abhor themselves when they have seen God's holiness. "I am dumb; my lips are unclean, because my inmost heart is vile; all the men I have ever known, though cleansed and robed as the priests in the temple, breath out unholiness. Holy and pure is God alone." "The sin of the world" can never be known, except to those who see the King, the Lord of Hosts—the Holy One.

IV. A BAPTISM OF FIRE.

Made conscious of sin in his very words of holy service, he has the seal of purity placed on his lips, and the tongue of fire put within him. This was through the altar, for blood and fire represent atonement and cleansing. The seraph was only the minister to convey the grace which was not in his own hand, but through the offering upon the altar and the Word of God spoken and believed.

V. A PLAIN CALL TO THE WORK OF HIS LIFE.

As soon as the cleansing fire entered the man's heart, he could hear the voice of God and not merely the seraph's. He learned that God longed, through human agency, to save men, and he was able to present himself a living sacrifice for God's service.

His lips being cleansed, he could speak with boldness to God Himself. The tongue of fire is the organ of prayer as well as of prophecy and of praise.

The call was (1) *Plain*: "Go." (2) *Definite*, to "this people." (3) *Life-long*, while there is a man to city, house, or country. (4) *Encouraging*, because of the power of "the holy seed," which is the Word of God.

LEARN:

1. In God's house anyone may see visions, hear voices, and receive grace and gifts for holy work.

2. In a time of national and political despondency, when some great king or leader dies, we may look for men of power to be called to the work of God.

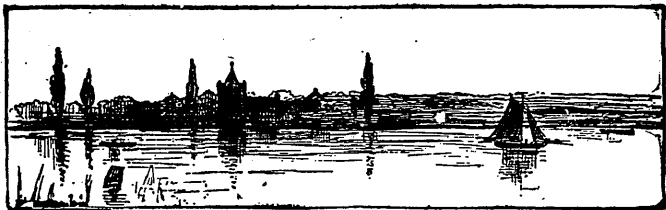
**I AM THE GOOD
SHEPHERD;
THE GOOD SHEPHERD
GIVETH HIS
LIFE FOR THE SHEEP.**

John x. 11.

**HIM HATH GOD
EXALTED
WITH HIS RIGHT HAND TO
BE A PRINCE AND
A SAVIOUR, FOR TO
GIVE REPENTANCE
TO ISRAEL,
AND FORGIVENESS
OF SINS.**

Acts v. 31





The Bush and the Book.

“Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the back side of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.

And Moses said, ‘I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt.’

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, ‘Moses, Moses.’ And he said, ‘Here am I.’

And He said, ‘Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.’

Moreover He said, ‘I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.” (Exodus, third chapter, verses one to six.)

God was pleased to reveal Himself to Moses through the bush. He can use any agency He thinks best—

lowly or majestic—and can put Divinity into union and fellowship with ordinary and common things. He who revealed Himself and called to one man from the leaves of a little shrub once, speaks now to multitudes through the leaves of that Book which is the Tree of Life for the healing of the nations.

Notice:—

I. THE FIRE OF GOD DID NOT CONSUME THE BUSH.

The Bible is as human and natural as any other book, but God is there. Its words are spirit and life. The Word, the Name of God, is the authority in it.

II. THE FIRE OF GOD AROUSED INTENSE CURIOSITY.

See Moses pacing round and round the shrub with much wonder and intense curiosity, forgetting for a time even the claims of his flock!

The Book of God is full of wonders calculated to arouse inquiry and most diligent investigation. Alas! folly and sin hold so many people's eyes that they do not search out the mysteries of the Scripture.

III. THE MAN WHO GAVE TIME TO ENQUIRE AND CONSIDER HEARD A VOICE.

We read, "When God saw that he turned aside to see." How many hundreds of times in the history of the world has God appeared and called in vain, because no man regarded! They knew not the time of their visitation, and so He could neither do nor say mighty things because of unbelief.

The Book has no voice for the careless or superficial,

but by those who draw near to read and understand in the spirit of Moses a voice is heard. The Bible is a talking book—the Voice of the Lord—the living God still.

IV. THE VOICE FROM THE BUSH WAS “COME NEAR, BUT NOT TOO NEAR!”

If Moses had gone poking in that burning bush with his shepherd's crook, it would have been just what some so-called Bible students have been doing lately. Those who do not want their sight consumed by that fire must reverently remember, in all their researches and criticisms, the voice, “Draw not nigh hither,” lest professing themselves wise they become fools. In Scripture as well as in Nature, God has His secrets; other things besides times and seasons the Father has put in His own power.

V. BARE FEET AS WELL AS A COVERED FACE BEFIT THOSE WHO STAND BEFORE GOD.

An old proverb says, “To him who wears a shoe it is as though the whole earth were covered with leather.” Self-sufficiency and artificial advantages are to be laid aside before God. Moses and the greatest scholar must stand, in the presence of divine things, on a level with all others—barefoot. There is “holy ground” around the Book as well as “the bush.” Those who have come to hear their own names spoken by God have usually approached the study of His Word upon their knees;

and personal revelation always precedes authority and ability to enlighten and deliver others.

Therefore,

1. *Recognise the Divine oracles.*

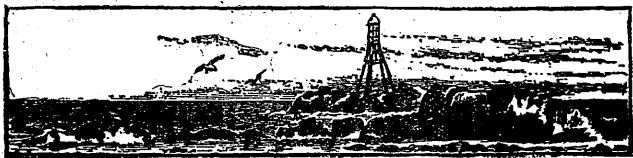
The chiefest advantage and profit of the Jew was that he possessed the oracles of God.

2. *Reverence the Divine oracles.*

Well may there be no answer in the Word of God to those who degrade and pull to pieces the earthly medium in which it has pleased God to put His heavenly treasure of power.

3. *Pray that in you, as in Moses after that sight, the Word of God may dwell.*

Moses himself became a burning bush—the living epistle—God's child of light. If you hold communion long and close with the Truth, you will be likewise baptised, and have a shining countenance, and a tongue powerful for good as a flame of fire.



“ Because he believed in his God.”

“It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom; and over these three presidents, of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage

Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

Then said these men, ‘ We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.’

Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him,

‘King Darius, live for ever. All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty

days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.'

Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and, his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree;

'Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?'

The king answered and said, 'The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.'

Then answered they and said before the king, 'That Daniel which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.'

Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to

deliver him: and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, 'Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.'

Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions.

Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, 'Thy God, whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee.'

And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him. Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel,

'O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?'

Then said Daniel unto the king, 'O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.'

Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and com-

manded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God." (Daniel, sixth chapter, verses one to twenty-three.)

"Because he believed in his God." This text is the jewel of the lesson. I want you to look at it very clearly. The whole secret of Daniel's strange life is told you here. Why he prayed when he was threatened with death it is easy to see, and why he dared to stand alone. He did not know that his faith would stop the mouths of lions, but he did know that he was perfectly safe in the strong and faithful hands of God, whether to live or to die.

See in this story—

I. FAITH IN GOD MAKES US BRAVE.

Daniel would have been just as afraid of the hungry lions as anyone else, only the fear of God destroyed all other fear, and the love of God was stronger than the love of honor or of life. When the eye is fixed on God, nothing else looks big, and armies of men are of no more consequence than swarms of flies.

II. FAITH IN GOD MAKES US DIFFERENT FROM OTHERS.

You are quite certain, if anyone is just like everybody else, and talks and acts in everything just in the fashion, that such a person is not walking with God. Daniel was different from others, and so they hated him.

You will often have to stand alone if you resolve to

obey God first in everything. Perhaps it is a pity, but you must be willing to be singular if you are to go to heaven.

III. FAITH IN GOD KEEPS US FROM ALL EVIL.

Not from all trouble, that is very plain; but loss and trouble, and suffering even, are sometimes our true good.

Suppose Daniel had been torn and devoured by the lions, would that prove that God did not care for him? Certainly not. See Paul beaten, stoned, shipwrecked, and at last beheaded! Had his faith failed? In no wise. If the angel that stopped the lions' mouths had been commissioned instead to bear Daniel's soul into Paradise, we should not have had this story to read in the Bible, but a little later in our history we should have heard, when "the Books" were opened, how, like John the Baptist, he was more than a conqueror through Him that loved him.

There are people who suffer far worse things than dying. It is not half so bad for a boy to die or lose money because he fears and obeys God, as it is for him to speak a lie or do an unholy deed because he does not believe that God sees and will surely punish him. Daniel's faith kept him alive, but it did far more; it did what Joseph's did—it kept him from sinning against God in the hour of trial.

Remember—

1. The only safe way through life is the path of faith. Believe on Jesus Christ, and you shall conquer.

2. Daniel's prayers, three times a day, explain, in a large degree, the secret of his powerful faith. Those who stop praying will not long keep on believing.

3. Satan is always trying to make it hard for us to pray regularly in secret. There will soon be no heroes of faith if people of the present age do not take care and follow Daniel to his secret chamber.

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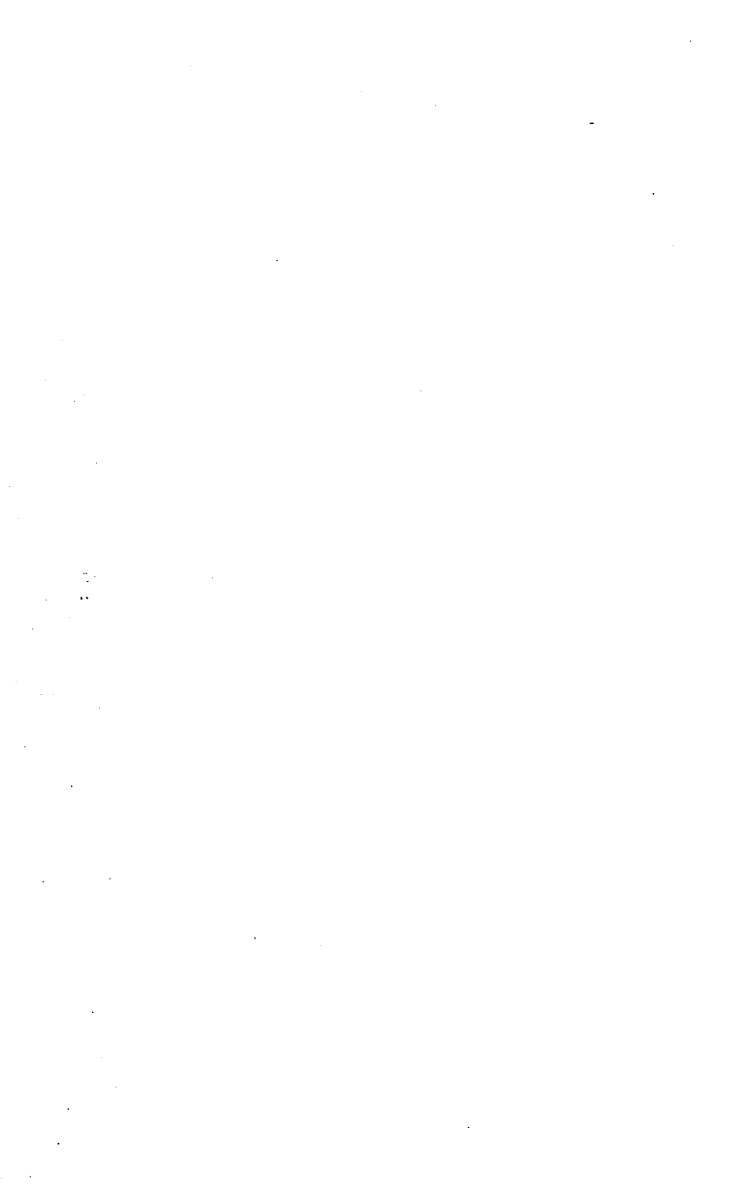
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